



Consequences of the Proliferation and Misuse of Small Arms and Light Weapons

SMALL ARMS WORKING GROUP FACT SHEETS



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Definitions

Small arms and light weapons are arms that can be used by one or two people and carried by a person, pack animal or light vehicle. This category of weapons is often abbreviated in these papers to “small arms.”

According to the 1997 United Nations’ Group of Governmental Experts, **small arms** are designed for person use by one person and include:

- Revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine-guns.

Light weapons are designed for use by a small crew and include:

- Heavy machine-guns, grenade launchers, small mortars, mobile anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, mobile rocket launchers, shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile launchers, and mortars of calibers under 100 mm.

Ammunition includes:

- Cartridges for small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines, explosives, and shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems.

Introduction

An estimated 639 million small arms and light weapons (SALW) are currently in circulation around the globe. These weapons are produced in over 90 countries and over 1200 companies around the world are involved in some aspect of the SALW trade. The legal global small arms market is estimated at \$4 billion and the illegal market is estimated at close to \$1 billion. Among the largest SALW exporters are the United States, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Russia, Brazil, and China. The largest SALW importers include the United States, Saudi Arabia, Cyprus, Japan, South Korea, Germany and Canada. In addition, at least one million small arms and light weapons are stolen or lost annually worldwide.

Small arms and light weapons have rightfully been called weapons of individual destruction; hundreds of thousands of people die every year from wounds caused by these weapons in both war zones and countries at peace. In outright violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, warring parties in many of today’s conflicts target non-combatants. Civilians, especially the most vulnerable, suffer the most from the effects of the fighting. Humanitarian organizations and peacekeepers often find it difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish their life-saving missions in small arms-infested regions.

The pernicious effects of the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons is not limited to war zones. Economic development is often negatively affected by violent crime, much of which is perpetrated with small arms. Small arms violence also robs communities of scarce public health resources, and impedes opportunities for investment and rebuilding after conflict. Small arms are also the weapon of choice for many violent extremists and insurgents, who use them in attacks ranging from targeted assassinations of government officials to the downing of commercial airliners. Strategies for curbing the illicit trafficking of these weapons are varied and include measures that control supply, curb demand, end misuse,

and remove existing weapons from circulation. These strategies work best when integrated into coordinated, multi-layered national and international programs.

Five years ago, the U.S. Small Arms Working Group (SAWG)* produced eleven fact sheets that highlighted the many ways in which small arms proliferation and misuse affects various aspects of life and society. Over the last five years, national, regional, and global initiatives have also been undertaken to mitigate these consequences. Still, hundreds of thousands of people are killed every year by small arms in countries at war and at peace. Clearly the international community must do more to prevent the human suffering these weapons cause.

As a service to policy makers, the media, NGOs, and others interested in small arms proliferation and misuse, SAWG has again updated the 11 original fact sheets (they were also updated in 2003), and added two more. These fact sheets are intended to serve as a resource for those interested in exploring the varied ways in which small arms proliferation and misuse affect people’s lives. They are not comprehensive, but rather give readers a glimpse into the complex consequences of these deadly weapons.

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Rachel Stohl, Chair, U.S. Small Arms Working Group, April 2006

**SAWG is an alliance of U.S.-based non-governmental organizations and individuals, that are working together to promote awareness of the small arms issue and changes in U.S. policies. SAWG members believe that small arms proliferation must be countered by more responsible policies on legal sales and international cooperation to reduce illicit trafficking.*

Small Arms and Brokers

Arms brokering contributes to small arms proliferation and misuse because:

- Arms brokers are key suppliers of weapons to violent non-state actors and repressive governments
- Brokers are skilled at manipulating current weak national and international arms controls
- Few countries have laws specifically regulating arms brokering

Arms brokers are individuals that help connect buyers and sellers of weapons. During the Cold War, rival governments recruited arms brokers to carry out arms deals. While the superpower rivalry has ended, many of these brokers, as well as new ones, continue to operate today, maintaining Cold War trafficking pipelines, as well as new connections, to supply weapons to problematic clients, including human rights abusers. These same pipelines are also used to transfer drugs, endangered animal species and products, precious minerals such as diamonds and other valuable commodities, as well as materials for making nuclear weapons.

Arms trafficking networks frequently involve the cooperation of a number of actors, often scattered in several countries. For example, the transfer of a Bulgarian surface-to-air missile system to Zimbabwean forces fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) involved Dutch arms brokers, who worked with transport companies based in the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium to fly the weapon system from Bulgaria and Slovakia to Harare, Zimbabwe and then to Kinshasa, DRC.

While not all arms brokers are involved in illegal activities, some are at the core of the shadowy networks that arm rebels, violent extremists, and repressive governments. Motivated primarily by profit, arms brokers are skilled in 1) using counterfeit documents, or acquiring legitimate documents through bribery; 2) transporting goods clandestinely (primarily via

air and sea routes); and 3) avoiding attention or escaping punishment—either by successfully circumventing national arms controls and international arms embargoes, or by benefiting from government protection.

Despite some national and international efforts to rein in these brokers, only about 40 governments have developed national legislation covering arms brokering. Even among these 40 countries, the quality of national brokering laws, and the rigor with which these laws are enforced, varies significantly. For example, some countries lack extraterritorial control over arms brokers who are citizens of their countries, but that arrange arms deals from abroad.

In recent years, the activities of arms brokers have come under increasing scrutiny. The role of these traffickers in the supply of small arms to conflict zones around the world has been documented by the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, national intelligence agencies, and the press. For example, according to UN reports, a Russian arms dealer Victor Bout has been implicated in violating or contributing to the violation of UN arms embargoes in Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the DRC. Yet Bout, like many other arms brokers, continues to operate with impunity.

Small Arms and Children

Small arms negatively impact the lives of children because:

- Children often suffer from small arms proliferation and misuse at a higher rate than the rest of the population
- Small arms proliferation and misuse interfere with the fulfillment of basic needs and the provision of basic services that are essential for children
- Small arms contribute to the use of child soldiers

Small arms are used to kill, injure, and commit human rights abuses against children and other civilians in armed conflicts and in countries at peace. Children are particularly vulnerable to the proliferation and misuse of small arms. In Colombia, for example, gun deaths rose 195.6 percent for the general population between 1979 and 2002, but increased 300 percent for children under 18 during the same period. In Chicago, gun deaths decreased 69 percent for the general population between 1979 and 2001, but increased 131 percent for minors. Small arms violence also causes psychosocial trauma in thousands of children. Moreover, conflicts fought with small arms often weaken traditional family structures and support systems for children by causing the death or injury of a parent or the forced separation of children from the rest of their family members. Experiencing the consequences of gun violence at an early age can be a key influence on a child's decision to become a combatant at an early age, or a key reason as to why some children come to view guns as legitimate tools for conflict resolution.

Small arms proliferation and misuse interfere with the provision of basic services upon which children depend. The excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms may impede the delivery of food assistance, interfere with the harvesting of foods and livestock production, and interrupt the delivery of health care.

Small arms proliferation often results in massive population displacement, uprooting millions of children and their families from their homes and making children more susceptible to disease, violence, military recruitment, and sexual assault. Approximately 20 million children have been displaced due to armed conflicts or sustained human rights violations. An estimated two thirds of these children are displaced within their own countries.

Small arms may reduce economic opportunities, resulting in increased poverty and hardship for millions of children and their families. The presence of small arms in a conflict region frequently inhibits children's educational opportunities. Schools may not function due to rampant instability or because parents and teachers fear that the children will be abducted for use as part of an armed force. In Uganda, children are often abducted by combatants while they are at school. The weight and size of small arms makes them easy for children to use and encourages the use of children as combatants. Children as young as eight years of age have been taught how to fire an assault rifle. Hundreds of thousands of children are currently serving as child soldiers in over 20 conflicts around the world.

Small Arms and Development

Small arms undermine development because:

- Fragile economies are damaged by small arms that fuel conflict and crime
- Development projects are hindered or deterred by small arms-related violence
- The threat of small arms violence diverts scarce resources to security

Unsafe and insecure environments make sustainable development impossible. Interstate conflict and internal insurgencies—fueled by the spread of small arms—destroy the physical and human resources needed for an economy to grow. Armed groups systematically block or damage transit routes, disrupt natural resource development or divert it for their own use, and attack key national industries as part of their combat strategy. To address public disorder, many governments are compelled to expand security services. The extra expenses for security reduce the amount of funds available for promoting agriculture, education, health care, and other activities critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. For example, the Inter-American Development Bank estimates that violence costs Latin American countries approximately 14 percent of annual regional GDP.

Widespread availability of deadly weaponry creates a climate of fear that prevents public and private foreign investors from proceeding with essential projects. Foreign investors and corporations are often reluctant to become involved in high risk environments where their investment capital or staff is under constant threat. Projects supported by donor governments are particularly sensitive to incidents of violence. Promised international development aid to post-war Afghanistan has largely failed to materialize because of continued insecurity.

The unregulated availability and misuse of small arms severely impedes humanitarian efforts, limits access to beneficiaries, and occasionally results in the suspension of operations or projects. The pervasiveness of these weapons

often requires organizations to adjust their work plans. Many aid agencies are obligated to spend their resources on security procedures and military convoys, and are frequently required to reduce their travel because of small arms-fueled insecurity. In Darfur, for instance, the rapid security deterioration in the fall of 2005, as small arms-wielding forces terrorized and murdered the civilian population, led several organizations to withdraw many of the over 11,000 aid personnel who had been providing critical basic services to more than 2 million internally displaced people.

Development and small arms are inextricably linked. While economic development cannot successfully occur without addressing the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, solving the arms problem cannot be solved without addressing development. Fifty percent of countries emerging from war slip back into conflict partially due to inadequate post-conflict development and reintegration programs. In post-conflict societies, large numbers of former combatants flood the job market only to discover a lack of economic opportunities. Ex-soldiers, typically still armed, often turn to crime as the only means of survival. The lack of systematic demobilization programs in post-conflict countries, both for ex-combatants and the well-armed populace, can lead to high levels of crime and violence after a conflict ends. In El Salvador, for example, the number of gun-related deaths actually rose after the civil war ended, due to the widespread use of weapons for criminal activities.

Small Arms and Disposal/ Destruction Programs

Properly disposing of or destroying surplus or obsolete small arms and light weapons is important because:

- Surplus or obsolete weapons are often stored improperly, making them a public safety threat to the communities in which they are located.
- Surplus or obsolete weapons are often vulnerable to theft and diversion by criminals and other violent actors.
- Small arms destruction and disposal programs are a cost-effective and relatively simple way to reduce the threat posed by surplus and obsolete small arms and light weapons

Surplus small arms and light weapons often pose a public safety threat to the communities in which they are stored, and a proliferation threat to the international community. Many surplus weapons are haphazardly stored in depots that are poorly designed and maintained. A small fire in such a depot can start a deadly chain reaction that sends missiles, shells, and other munitions raining down on the surrounding neighborhoods. In May 2004, a hastily discarded cigarette in the 275th depot near the Ukrainian town of Melitopol set off a series of explosions that killed five people and caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damages.

Surplus weapons are also vulnerable to theft and diversion, the extent of which ranges from low level pilfering by poorly paid soldiers to diversions of large, government-approved arms shipments. Many of these stolen and diverted weapons end up in the arsenals of insurgents, criminals, and other violent actors.

Preventing accidents involving theft and diversion of surplus small arms and light weapons requires that these weapons be quickly identified as surplus and properly disposed of. Selling these weapons is the preferred means of disposal for many governments, but legitimate, responsible buyers are often difficult to find. When a legitimate buyer cannot be located, responsible governments often destroy their surplus weapons.

Destruction can take many forms: cutting, melting, burning, crushing, encasing in cement, ocean dumping, etc. Each method has advantages and disadvantages, depending on the quantity, type, age and location of weapons; the political context; and available resources. For example, open air burning—which can be done on-site, is inexpensive, requires little expertise, and has symbolic significance—may be the preferred method for destroying weapons collected from ex-combatants in a post-conflict context. This method would be less appropriate for disposing of the massive government stockpiles that litter many former Warsaw Pact countries, which require facilities that can quickly destroy large quantities of mixed weaponry.

In recent years, donor governments have established several destruction assistance programs. NATO provides such assistance through its Partnership for Peace program, using donations from member states to fund destruction efforts. Some countries also fund bilateral destruction assistance programs, the largest of which is coordinated by the U.S. State Department. Since the late 1990s, these programs have facilitated the destruction of millions of surplus small arms and light weapons worldwide.

Small Arms and Human Rights

Small arms contribute to human rights abuses because:

- Small arms enhance the power of abusive forces to repress individuals and groups
- Small arms are used against civilians both in armed conflicts and in countries at peace
- Small arms are transferred to abusive actors because of government involvement or negligence in implementing or enforcing arms controls

Small arms are used to commit a wide variety of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, and torture. Small arms-facilitated human rights abuses committed by governments can be grouped into three categories: commission, omission, or negligence. Commission refers to the use of arms to violate international human rights, including the right to life, and security of person. It also is characterized by direct government involvement in the provision of arms to abusive recipients, including paramilitary or proxy groups. Omission pertains to the absence of regulation over the abusive use of weapons by private actors. It also includes allowing private traffickers to transfer weapons that further a government's political or commercial interest. Negligence encompasses a failure to implement or enforce arms controls, take steps to prevent abuses by armed individuals or groups, prosecute those responsible for abuses, or secure one's borders to prevent illicit gun trafficking.

Small arms have been widely used to kill, maim, rape, and forcibly displace people in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan. In Liberia, fresh supplies of small arms to the armed group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), in 2003, allowed the group to initiate an attack in Monrovia in which thousands of civilians were injured.

Small arms have been used to forcibly recruit and arm children to serve as soldiers in dozens of countries around the world. Both government security forces and armed opposition groups have been implicated in the rampant misuse of small arms in conflicts.

Small arms are also used to violate human rights in countries nominally at peace. Some government forces use their weapons in ways that violate the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. For example, security forces in Uzbekistan and Burma have used excessive force against civilian protesters. Merely possessing a small arm confers power and it does not need to be fired to be misused. For example, soldiers in Thailand reportedly have used rifle butts to beat to death hill tribesmen in custody. While these kinds of abuses are well documented, abusive actors—whether belonging to governments or private groups—have seldom been held accountable for the role they have played in human rights abuses. The same is true of the arms-supplying governments and private traffickers who furnish them with the weapons they misuse.

Small Arms and International Humanitarian Law

Small arms contribute to violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) because:

- Targeting civilians has become more common as a war-fighting strategy
- Small arms are easily available to a wide range of undisciplined actors
- Transfers of small arms to known abusers facilitate further atrocities

While self-defense and self-determination are well established rights under international law, such rights do not come without limitations. The use of conventional weapons, including small arms, in armed conflict is subject to an extensive legal regime of restrictions. International humanitarian law (IHL)—as enshrined in the 1907 Hague Conventions, the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the 1977 Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions, and the 1980 UN Convention on Conventional Weapons among others—is designed to protect civilians and prevent unnecessary suffering during times of conflict by limiting both the physical means and the methods that combatants can use to wage war. In order to limit suffering during war, governments have developed law that forbids among other things, the deliberate targeting of civilians, the use of indiscriminate force that is likely to harm civilians, and the use of certain weapons and tactics that are indiscriminate by their nature or excessively injurious to combatants.

Since most small arms are not by their nature prohibited under IHL, the violations of IHL largely occur when these weapons are misused by warring parties. Both government and irregular forces, which include government-sponsored militias as well as rebel groups, have been responsible for many IHL violations committed with small arms. To offer only a few examples, small arms have been used to

carry out summary executions in Liberia, target civilians in Nepal, rape women in Sierra Leone, forcibly recruit and arm children in Sri Lanka, commit massacres in Colombia, execute deserters in Iraq, and carry out forced disappearances in Chechnya.

In the last decade, violations of IHL are occurring more frequently because targeting of civilians has become an integral part of the war-fighting strategies of some rebel groups and states. The unregulated proliferation of weapons contributes to violations of IHL by providing abusive actors with the tools needed to commit these crimes. Due to their low cost and wide availability, small arms are used by an expanding circle of actors, including children, who have little or no training, discipline, or accountability. A culture of impunity and violence, which is so prevalent in many conflict-torn societies, encourages the misuse of these weapons, prolongs armed conflicts, and makes them more intractable. The absence of adequate measures to address the irresponsible transfer of weapons and their misuse by combatants calls into serious question whether governments are fulfilling their obligations under IHL to 'respect and ensure respect' for the basic protections this body of law establishes.

Small Arms and Natural Resources

The illegal sale of natural resources facilitates arms trafficking because:

- Small arms are traded directly for commodities or purchased with the profits generated by commodity sales
- The same networks used to smuggle commodities are used to carry out illegal arms deals
- Profits from the sale of natural resources have been used to arm rebel groups, terrorist organizations, and government forces

Small arms trafficking, wars fought over natural resources, and the illegal trade in commodities, such as diamonds and timber, are interconnected. Small arms are the weapons of choice for both government and rebel forces involved in resource wars because they are inexpensive, easy to conceal, widely available, and can be traded directly for commodities or paid for with the profits generated by commodity sales.

With the end of the Cold War, the superpowers cut off arms and aid to many of their Cold War allies, forcing them to find sources of revenue and weapons elsewhere. The income generated by exploiting natural resources such as petroleum, timber, drugs, diamonds and other minerals including Coltan (used in cellular phones and other electronic equipment), provides many of these governments and armed groups with the revenue needed to purchase weapons, fight wars, and prop-up illegitimate regimes. During the 1990s, resource wars—which are often fought primarily with small arms and light weapons—killed more than 5 million people globally, and left as many as 20 million displaced from their homes.

Arms are smuggled through complex networks that coincide with the illicit trade in commodities. Diamond trafficking is a particularly intricate system of trade that extends from the government palaces in Liberia and Burkina Faso to private arms smugglers in the former Soviet Union and to the diamond dealers

operating in cities like Antwerp and Tel Aviv. Diamonds, which are often traded for weapons, are an especially popular black market commodity because they are very easy to hide, difficult to trace, and highly profitable.

Many rebel groups and terrorist organizations use profits from the trafficking in natural resources to fund their operations. Such transactions are especially common in locations where the state has little control (as in Colombia), or where governments or populations in neighboring states are friendly to their cause (as in Sierra Leone). The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) generate an estimated \$500 million a year from the drug trade by taxing drug growers and traffickers. These groups also swap drugs and other commodities for weapons. Throughout the 1990s, for example, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone mined between \$25 million and \$125 million worth of diamonds each year, and used the profits to purchase weapons to fight their brutal civil war. Many of these diamonds were traded to former Liberian leader Charles Taylor in exchange for weapons and military training. The RUF is also alleged to have sold diamonds to al-Qaida operatives in Sierra Leone at below-market prices. The terrorist organization then re-sold the diamonds in Europe, reaping millions of dollars in profits.

Small Arms and Peacekeeping

Small arms interfere with peacekeeping missions because:

- Small arms increase the possibility of outbreak of conflicts in areas of crisis
- Small arms endanger the safety of both international peacekeepers and the local population
- Destabilizing accumulations of small arms hinder lasting conflict resolution

Small arms affect all stages of a peacekeeping operation, from its inception to its implementation and conclusion. Even after peace accords are signed and peacekeeping missions approved, small arms violence often makes it impossible for such operations to begin or for peacekeepers to do their job. For example, deployment of the original UN peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was considerably delayed due to continued fighting on the ground. In June 2003, 1,400 more peacekeeping troops, led by France, were sent to augment troops already in place because of small arms violence between Hema and Lendu militias in Bunia, DRC.

Not only are peacekeeping missions at risk from small arms use, but so are the soldiers and civilian officials sent to conflict zones to implement these missions. The United Nations has determined that small arms and light weapons pose the principal threat to troops seeking to establish or maintain peace among combatants. Since the inception of UN peacekeeping, in 1948, over 2,240 peacekeepers have been killed while serving on UN missions, many of them with small arms and light weapons.

Increasingly since the mid-1990s, peacekeeping troops and local UN employees have been targeted and killed in places as diverse as Kosovo, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Bosnia, and Afghanistan. The threat of small arms violence to peacekeepers is increasing over time, with

many more peacekeepers killed during more recent missions. Of the seven years in which more than 100 peacekeepers died, one was in 1961, three were in the 1990s, and three came in the first five years of the new century.

Some missions have been particularly hard-hit. For example, peacekeepers in Haiti have suffered 13 fatalities, many from encounters with heavily armed former army and police officers. At one point, heavily armed rebels in Sierra Leone held more than 500 UN peacekeepers captive for several weeks. In Angola, three UN operations in a row failed in large part because of rebels' easy access to small arms and light weapons.

Some UN peacekeeping operations are mandated to address the presence and proliferation of small arms. Mandates can include tasks such as the comprehensive disarmament, demobilization, resettlement and reintegration of armed groups; close monitoring of the supply of war-related materiel to the field for peacekeepers; targeting organized crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism; and providing public security crisis management. To fulfill such missions in former war zones awash in weapons, peacekeepers must use the resources needed for post-conflict peace-building to combat the myriad problems that accompany rampant small arms proliferation.

Small Arms and Public Health

Small arms contribute to public health crises because:

- Small arms kill hundreds of thousands of people every year and injure many more
- Small arms injuries burden hospitals and other health facilities, and small arms misuse disrupts the delivery of vital health services
- Small arms fuel conflicts that contribute to forced migration, the spread of infectious disease, and psychological trauma

The proliferation and misuse of small arms pose major public health hazards, causing deaths, injuries, disabilities, and mental health problems. Small arms are directly responsible for an estimated 60-90 percent of deaths during armed conflicts, and upwards of 200,000 non-conflict deaths each year. One person dies from small arms use every minute, and the rate of firearm injury is even higher. In the United States, three people are injured by firearms for every person killed; in Brazil, the injury rate is ten times the gun death rate.

The economic cost of treating firearms injuries is enormous. In the United States, medical treatment for firearms injuries in 2000 alone consumed over \$1.4 billion. Experts estimate the cost of small arms violence in Brazil at 10 percent of annual GDP; in Colombia, the costs rise to 25 percent of annual GDP. The price of small arms proliferation extends beyond emergency medical care, however, to rehabilitation and psychological support programs for victims and their families.

Small arms violence can cripple health care systems in the developing world, where resources are scarce and infrastructures are weak. Small arms misuse can interrupt the delivery of health services with life-threatening consequences. Local blood supplies may be depleted and individuals may succumb to treatable diseases because resources are diverted from basic health care services to care for gun violence victims. Further, armed groups often target health workers, hospitals, ambulances, and clinics.

Conflicts exacerbated by small arms cause internal displacement, which contributes to the spread of diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, bubonic plague, and AIDS, further stretching the limits of medical resources. In many conflict zones, transportation routes used for the distribution of food and medicine are insecure due to the proliferation or threat of small arms, and sanitation and water purification systems break down, leading to outbreaks of diseases such as cholera. Sexual violence at gunpoint creates a high risk for widespread transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Small Arms and Terrorism

International control of small arms and light weapons is a critical part of counter-terrorism strategies because:

- Small arms and light weapons are the weapons of choice for terrorists and terrorist groups
- Small arms help create conditions in which terrorist networks thrive
- Multi-dimensional responses can reduce terrorists' access to small arms

Small arms and light weapons are the weapons of choice for many terrorists. Of the 175 terrorist attacks documented in the U.S. State Department's 2003 report, Patterns of Global Terrorism, approximately half were committed with small arms and light weapons. These incidents ranged from targeted assassinations to indiscriminate attacks on crowded public places. An example of the latter occurred in Bogotá in November 2003 when members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia lobbed fragmentation grenades into two crowded bars, killing one person and wounding 72. In other cases, small arms and light weapons are used to carry out attacks in which other weapons (typically bombs) inflict most of the casualties. During the May 2003 suicide bombing of American residential compounds in Saudi Arabia, for example, the bombers gained access to their target only after other members of their team used small arms to kill security guards and open the gates surrounding the compound. Small arms are also an integral part of the criminal activities that fund the operations of many terrorist organizations, such as the drug trade.

Small arms and light weapons proliferation contributes indirectly to terrorism as well. As evidenced by al-Qaida's presence in Afghanistan in the 1990s, failed and failing states are attractive areas of operation for terrorists, who use them as safe havens and tap into the vast criminal networks that spring up in the absence of effective law enforcement. The civil wars that often contribute to state failure are sustained and exacerbated by access to large quantities of these weapons.

Governments pursue many different strategies for reducing terrorists' access to small arms and light weapons. These strategies include strengthening export controls, securing government stockpiles, destroying surplus weapons, improving border security, and increasing cooperation between national and international law enforcement organizations. Additional steps are taken to secure weapons that are particularly dangerous in the hands of terrorists, such as shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles. Some governments that produce, export or import these weapons require mandatory monthly physical inventories and separate storage of missiles and launchers.

Small Arms and Tourism

Small arms can hinder or prevent tourism because:

- Fear of conflict or crime-related gun violence keeps tourists from traveling to certain destinations
- Tourist sites are sometimes damaged or rendered inaccessible by ongoing hostilities
- Foreign tourists are sometimes expressly targeted in armed attacks

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and a leading source of revenue for many developing countries. According to the World Tourism Organization, tourism is among the top five “exports” for 83 percent of countries, and the main source of foreign exchange earnings for 38 percent of countries. Tourism has one of the highest rates of job creation, both directly within the industry and in related areas, accounting for nearly 200 million jobs, and over 40 percent of GDP in small island economies and developing countries. Tourism also helps bring in foreign currency, providing a more consistent source of income than exports like coffee or other primary goods. Yet the dangers associated with the proliferation of small arms may drive tourists away, often from the countries most dependent on tourism as a source of revenue. Violence in several African states, for example, reduced tourism by one-third to one-half in the late 1990s.

The outbreak of conflict or insurgent activity will drive even the most adventurous travelers away from traditional tourist havens. Southern Mexico, Indonesia, and the Philippines are among the many locations that have seen a drop in tourism due to localized hostilities. The impact of rebel groups’ activities may directly impact specific tourist sites, such as in Kenya, where bandit groups use animal reserves as their bases of operations. The high levels of gun

violence associated with crime in post-conflict societies also keep tourists from visiting previous vacation destinations. For example, Guatemala and El Salvador have only recently seen tourism rise significantly, even though their internal conflicts ended years ago. Recent political instability and related violence in 2000 led to mass cancellations of trips to places like Israel and Zimbabwe. In all of these countries, small arms are the weapons most commonly used to cause the instability and violence that drive away tourists.

In several recent cases, armed groups have targeted tourists in order to disrupt an industry that provides much needed income to the governments that they oppose. When 62 people were gunned down by members of the Islamic Group in Luxor, Egypt in November 1997, the militant group achieved some of its goals: the attack brought on a sharp decrease in tourism in Egypt and a subsequent decline in GDP growth for the country in 1998. In another example, Muslim separatists based in the Philippines have kidnapped tourists there and in Malaysia to make demands on both Manila and the tourists’ home states.

Small Arms and Weapons Collection Programs

Small arms collection programs reduce the negative consequences of small arms proliferation and misuse because they:

- Reduce the supply of weapons
- Prevent weapons from being used in crimes, banditry, and social violence
- Prevent weapons from fueling new conflicts in neighboring areas

Small arms remain lethal for many years after their manufacture. When weapons remain in post-conflict societies, the damage they cause can rival the suffering caused by the armed conflict itself.

Police and other security forces often coercively collect weapons from criminals and illegal holders of weapons. When one side is defeated in an armed conflict, they may also be forced to surrender weapons in their possession. In contrast, a voluntary weapons collection program is one in which a responsible government, NGO, or international government organization motivates individuals or groups to surrender weapons that are not required for purposes of national defense or internal security and which may be unsafe for or unwanted by citizens. Incentives offered as part of these programs can include amnesty from prosecution for violations of weapons laws, monetary or in-kind rewards, or collective community development assistance.

Voluntary weapons collection programs are used both in post-conflict environments as well as in societies experiencing high levels of armed crime and social violence. Coercive and voluntary weapons collection programs are

commonly utilized internationally, and are now an integral part of the development of many post-conflict reconstruction programs. For example, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted a “Best Practice Guide on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Disarmament, Demobilization & Reintegration Processes.”

Collection programs are carried out at both the local and national levels, and sometimes yield large quantities of weapons. For example, in 2004 and 2005, 459,855 small arms were collected in Brazil in exchange for cash vouchers. According to the Brazilian health ministry there were 3,234 (or 8 percent) fewer homicides in 2004 than in the prior year—the first reduction in recent history. In Afghanistan, the United Nations’ Afghanistan New Beginnings Program, had, as of January 3, 2006, collected 37,571 small arms and nearly 3 million rounds of ammunition.

Small Arms and Women

Small arms have devastating impacts on women because:

- Women experience the consequences of small arms violence on a daily basis in both conflict and non-conflict situations
- Women are disproportionately the victims of small arms violence compared with their role as gun owners and users
- Women are underrepresented in efforts to deal with the aftermath of gun violence

Every year thousands of women are shot, traumatised, intimidated, and raped at gunpoint around the world. While men are more likely to make, sell, buy, own, or use small arms, and are more likely to be killed or physically injured by them (men are the victims in over 90 percent of firearm homicides), the damage that women suffer from the availability and misuse of guns is disproportionate to their role as owners or users of these weapons.

Women and girls suffer many different negative effects from the threat and misuse of small arms. For example, in conflict and post-conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, sexual violence, used as a weapon of war, occurs at the barrels of guns. Women and girls as young as ten have been abducted at gunpoint from their homes. In addition, women and children fleeing conflict make up the majority of internally displaced people and refugees. In refugee camps, which should be places of safety, many women and girls are routinely gang raped and abused. In the Dadaab refugee camp in Northern Kenya, for example, 75 percent of reported rapes and sexual assaults occurred at the hands of armed assailants.

While women are often victims of conflict, they also participate as combatants and in support roles, providing information, food, clothing and shelter. In conflict zones, women often become the main providers for their devastated families, and bear the long-term burden of caring for the sick and injured, because of the diminished adult male population. However,

despite their many roles during and after conflicts, women are frequently excluded from post-conflict decision-making and disarmament and demobilisation processes. In Sierra Leone, although women were estimated to have made up more than 12 percent of total fighting forces, they only represented 6.5 percent of demobilized fighters, 84 percent of which were men.

Women are also victims of gun violence in non-conflict zones. Women are much more likely to be shot by someone they know well, using a legally held weapon, than by an anonymous assailant. Half of the women who are killed each year by firearms are killed by an intimate partner, and a woman increases her chances of being killed by an intimate partner by 50 percent when she owns a gun.

Women have taken leadership roles in organizing locally, nationally, regionally and internationally to highlight the dangers of gun violence and to campaign for legislative change. Despite these efforts, women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes. One step forward has been the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security—passed in October 2000—which provides a platform for women's voices to be heard in war zones and in the aftermath of armed conflict.



**For more information about the Small Arms Working Group,
visit our web site at:**

<http://fas.org/asmp/campaigns/smallarms/sawg.htm>