

# The Security Implications of Microdisarmament

Christopher D. Carr



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By

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USAF Counterproliferation Center  
Air War College

Air University  
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama



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## **The Author**

Dr. Christopher Carr joined the Air War College in 1998. Previously he was Senior Researcher, Center for Public Policy and Contemporary Issues, University of Denver. From 1986-88, 1989-93, he was Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of Political Science, U.S. Air Force Academy. He has written articles on arms transfer policy and most recently contributed a chapter to *Arms Control Toward the 21st Century*. This paper focuses on his current research on the instability created by light weapons proliferation and on the prospects of microdisarmament. His expertise is in sub-state conflict, light weapons proliferation, arms-saturated environments, “Kalashnikov cultures,” conventional arms transfers, and international organized crime. Dr. Carr holds a B.A. from the University of Lancaster, UK and a Ph.D. in International Relations from the London School of Economics (LSE).

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## The Security Implications Of Microdisarmament

Christopher D. Carr

### I. Introduction

In arms control, as in life, size tends to be a key factor in generating interest and absorbing resources. The greater the potential lethality of the device, be it battleship or Bomb, the more great minds become exercised towards great ideas of management and control. The relatively small numbers of major weapon systems in the hands of relatively few state powers allows for a certain elegance of thought to develop that is worthy of the attention of philosopher, strategist and high policymaker. But while the architects of arms control dwell on their great designs the majority of the world's population are not concerned with the potential threat from weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Instead, they are galvanized by the threat posed to their security by the mass of weapons of a more intimate destructive capability. For these people "small" arms do not equate with "small" threat but rather with "real" threat. It is toward a mitigation of this real threat posed by small arms, or light weapons, that the concept of microdisarmament is dedicated.<sup>1</sup>

Microdisarmament is, of course, a hyperbole. Since the number of globally available light weapons is unknown (figures range from 500 million units to more than a billion) and they exist in the inventories of all state and many non-state actors, it is patently unrealistic to expect the complete dissolution of the small arms inventory. Instead, in the words of former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (who coined the term "microdisarmament" in 1995), "by this (I) mean *practical* disarmament in the context of...light weapons that are actually killing people in the hundreds of thousands" (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> In the four years since this statement was made it has been further moderated so that "microdisarmament" is now an umbrella concept designed to include the control of light weapons through counter-proliferation activities, through the inception of international regimes and through attempts to search for and destroy extant inventories.

The light weapons initiative began with and retains a close affinity with the landmines campaign. As with the landmines debate, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were the prime movers in raising the initial concerns over the destabilizing effects of weaponized states and communities. And again intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), most prominently the UN,

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European Union and Organization of American States, became involved before individual states began to take notice of the issue. As such, it is possible that we are witnessing a trend in innovation in international security, in which conscience-raising by NGOs, amplified by media and the Internet, predicates IGO and state-based action.

At its worst the uncontrolled proliferation of light weapons has resulted in a level of weaponization in which an armed populace directly challenges, subverts or even abrogates the power of a centralized authority. This phenomenon has earned the sobriquet of “Kalashnikov culture.”<sup>3</sup> The identification is with the most prolific of light weapons, the Soviet Avtomat Kalashnikov (AK) series of assault rifles. Such cultures are identifiable in Latin America (Colombia, El Salvador/Guatemala), sub-Saharan Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Great Lakes Region, Sudan, Uganda, Somalia), the Near East (the Caucasus, Yemen), South Asia (Afghanistan, northern Pakistan and India) and Europe (Albania, the former Yugoslavia). In these (and incipiently at least eight more) states, norms of popular behavior and expectations of governmental action are sufficiently corrupted by the presence of weapons in the hands of the citizenry that power has devolved into the hands of tribes, clans, gangs and other sub-state actors.

At this juncture a certain philosophical dilemma must be addressed. If authority is absent within a society then the defense of self and family devolves to the individual. Microdisarmament is predicated on withdrawing the instrument of such defense, the gun, from the control of the individual. For this action to be morally sustainable the concept of microdisarmament must be part of a process which both protects the vulnerable populace from armed marauders as well as from tyrannical governments holding a monopoly of armed power. Indeed, most “Kalashnikov cultures” are the result of failures of governance, rather than from an easy embracing of Hobbesian anarchy. To disarm without substituting the reality of protective security is to play God with the lives of those that have been disarmed.

But if the latter appears to give qualified support to weaponization as a necessary evil in the face of injustice or of a break down in order, then experiences with “Kalashnikov cultures” would rebut such a conclusion. The notion that some form of street-level deterrence regime prevails if a society is heavily armed is not borne out by evidence. In the city of Karachi, where the arms from the North West Frontier Province and from Afghanistan have washed into the society for more than two decades, violence has become

both epidemic and endemic. Gun law, in the form of vigilantism, terrorism and extra-judicial killing, have created an almost uninhabitable urban environment, with the additional element that most people in the city have no recourse but to live and die within its environs. Similarly, the fact that there may be six weapons for every human in Yemen has not made for a self-regulating, harmonious community but rather for an environment of constantly feuding clans with an international reputation for institutional and personal violence.<sup>4</sup>

The evolution of “Kalashnikov” cultures and of weaponized societies in most of the developing world are directly linked to two of the seminal political phenomena of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: colonialism and the Cold War. In the case of the former, the imperfect division of the global political map created tensions of governance and legitimacy which have often resulted in the failure of nascent democracies and of the rule of law. As the result the conditions which empowered armed groups have been perpetuated in the former territories of the European and Soviet empires. The icons of centralized authority, either in the form of parliaments, in Africa for example, or state intimidation, in the case of the Soviet empire, were either inappropriate or unsustainable. They were then replaced by more traditional forms of authority which themselves were often dependent on traditional forms of control, most particularly variations on “gun law” or armed patronage.

Like colonialism, the Cold War provided for its own structural dislocations, but massive light weapons proliferation has been its contribution to the problem of weaponized states. East-West competition often took the form of military aid programs and light weapons were the loose change of these attempts to win friends and influence governments. Not considered either destabilizing nor politically “dangerous,” small arms were often given away freely (and for free) to allies and surrogates as a method of cementing relations or supporting pro-U.S. or pro-Soviet administrations. Unlike aircraft or tanks it was felt that such dispersals, while lacking in positive symbolism, were also unburdened with moral implications. Even when light weapons were the principal tools of a foreign policy initiative (for example, the arming of the Contras) it was felt that this was an acceptable low cost, low risk strategy. Only in rare cases, such as the provision of “Stinger” manportable air defense systems (MANPADS) to the Afghan mujahadeen, was there any concern about unforeseeable consequences.

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The result of the dislocations of the post-colonial era and of the end of the Cold War, exacerbated by the number of weapons proliferated during the latter era, is that of broad bands of instability stretching across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Such instability serves neither the interest of the United States nor of the international community. In many ways light weapons are a more mobile, more flexible adjunct of landmines. They rarely decay and thus their lethality continues across both geographical divides and generations. Much like errant drift nets, small arms that were released from the arsenals of Uganda or Albania, from the “gray-market” factories of Bulgaria, stolen from the police stations of South Africa, continue to inhibit the evolution of civil society until they are rendered harmless.

The challenge, therefore, is to identify and decommission those arms that already exist in an uncontrolled form and to inhibit the infusion of any more light weapons into the areas of concern. Such an Augean task will obviously involve entities at the national, supranational and sub-national level and will require some sense of shared responsibility emanating from a consensually-based, coherent and clear strategy. Currently, such a strategy or even consensus does not yet exist. The remainder of this work, therefore, will concentrate on clarifying the discrete elements of the problem (proliferation and decommissioning) and on identifying such strands of strategy that have already been proposed to address the problem.

## **II. Controlling Proliferation**

If arms continue to flow to zones or areas of conflict then disarming or decommissioning becomes moot. Therefore, the first objective of a light weapons counterproliferation regime must be to establish definitions that identify, by circumstances and geography, where light weapons should be subject to restriction or embargo. Having established parameters of restraint, the next task is to target the illicit (gray-market) and illegal (black-market) providers who would flaunt or subvert any rules or regulations. Finally, the mechanisms of restraint must be supported by appropriate support structure, intelligence capability and enforcement tools. In all these areas a certain amount of activity has been undertaken over the past five years but for the most part it has been desultory and incoherent.

A major inhibitant to any multilateral approach to the issues has been the continuing political and economic utility of arms transfers. Although the major arms suppliers (United States, Western Europe) have little economic capital vested in light weapons, such cannot be said for other states. Russia, the former Soviet territories, Bulgaria, North Korea and certain of the Balkan states have all found that sales of light weapons provide a useful flow of hard currency and act as an entrepot for other goods and services.<sup>5</sup> In addition, light weapons transfers have become co-mingled with the trade in narcotics and the countertrade in minerals and natural products (for example, endangered species and hardwoods).<sup>6</sup> In this way, corrupt officials and criminal elements in supplier states have found a useful way to enhance their own wealth by bartering guns and ammunition for other illicit goods, and then passing the whole profits into the international banking system. The economic rationale behind an unrestricted trade in light weapons, therefore, is as much tied to opportunities for personal enrichment by kleptocratic regimes and corrupt groups as it is to formal economic opportunity for legitimate business and needy states.

The rules-of-the-road that have been established so far have been predominantly at the multilateral level. Perhaps the most purposeful of these attempts has been the Inter-American Convention Against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.<sup>7</sup> This Organization of American States (OAS) initiative was prompted by the chronically destabilizing impact of errant light weapons in Latin America in general and in Central America in particular. To date its principal contribution has been to define the issues (sovereignty,



jurisdiction, cooperation) in a sufficiently generic fashion as to provide a blueprint for not only future regional accords but also for a proposed United Nations protocol on illicit firearms trafficking. Proposed in 1997 and signed by all but four OAS members (as of September 1999), the InterAmerican Convention has not been fully implemented and tested by events but it appears to combine political realism with an adequate framework for communication of concerns and ideas.

The European Union (EU) has taken a somewhat different approach to the light weapons issue. It has concentrated first on formulating a “Code of Conduct” for those states that legally export small arms.<sup>8</sup> By doing this the Union has attempted to establish a moral high ground from which it can operate against rogue suppliers at both the state and sub-state level. In parallel with this “cleansing” process, the EU has also begun to approach the gray- and black-markets as a distinctive security, intelligence and law enforcement problem and to delegate personnel and resources accordingly. Again, these initiatives are too new to be considered either failures or successes. But judging by a burgeoning community of interested parties in the European media and in the academic communities, the light weapons proliferation problem is at least being discussed as a serious and important set of issues. Whether this will translate into meaningful legislation, treaty law, regulation and action remains to be seen.

Other multilateral initiatives have taken place within areas affected by weaponization. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has sponsored meetings and conferences which have resulted in some real successes in coordination of law enforcement and security activities within the region. Similarly, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) announced a moratorium on light weapons importation and manufacture within their zone. However, these efforts have been undermined by the infusion of new arms through illicit channels from such suppliers as Bulgaria and Ukraine. Indeed, light weapons have flowed almost uninterruptedly to UNITA forces in Angola. They have been transhipped through at least three East African countries and the activity has involved high officials of government and in the security forces. The lure of a countertrade in diamonds appears, in this case, to have proved stronger than a desire to halt light weapons proliferation.

Much of the most passionate commitment and many of the practical suggestions on microdisarmament issues have emanated from NGOs.

Organizations such as the California-based PrepCom (now merged with the International Action Network on Small Arms), Human Rights Watch, International Alert and South Africa's Institute for Security Studies have gone beyond secondary-source analysis and hand-wringing and have undertaken real field-work and proposed undramatic but useful incrementalist approaches to proliferation issues.<sup>9</sup> Such databases as exist on light weapons issues are held by these organizations and this gives them the necessary status to sit at the high table of multilateral discussions. Inevitably duplication occurs but this is being overcome by a system of networking that appears to be relatively free of hubris and rivalry.

No matter how galvanized the IGOs and NGOs might become on the issue of light weapons proliferation, such an effort would be undermined if the United States were not committed to solving the problem. While it is true that less than complete commitment by the U.S. to the landmines treaty did not completely detract from the overall effort, a less than complete subscription to the concept of the control of light weapons by the U.S. would make any major political and practical breakthrough unlikely.

The Clinton administration has indicated an interest and level of concern over the light weapons issue. It was a prime mover behind the InterAmerican Convention and is attempting to extrapolate the Convention to form the basis for a UN-sponsored global framework for controlling the proliferation of light weapons. In addition, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has incorporated light weapons issues into three policy speeches. However, perhaps motivated by the experiences of Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor, in 1999 there have been indications that the United States is now committed to elevating light weapons issues to a higher level of action. This new mood is exemplified by a statement made by Eric Newsom, Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, in which he stated: "The United States . . . must try to stem the supply of (light) weapons and contain the devastation they cause. **This will require us to begin to integrate small arms concerns into the fabric of our diplomatic relations, as we now do with democracy and human rights**" (emphasis in original).<sup>10</sup> Whether such a declaration will survive the interagency process or a change in administration is arguable but it does appear to grant the imprimatur of high-level support over the light weapons proliferation issue.

If institutional support for a light weapons counter-proliferation strategy is indeed sound and building, then the nature and direction of that strategy needs to be outlined and agreed upon. At the present there is less a strategy than there is a collection of programs, sub-organizations and proposals.

Despite the efforts of the NGOs, there is not a comprehensive database, nor is there a clearinghouse for ideas. Great faith is being placed upon a United Nations conference to be convened in 2001, in the hope that a coherent strategy might emerge from that meeting, but meanwhile it has been left to interested parties to formulate some interim strategy.

The best frame of reference to date is that provided by historical and existing arms embargoes. At any time a state may be subject to or influenced by multiple binding and non-binding embargo agreements. In 1996, for example, the United Kingdom was constrained in its arms transfers by six binding United Nations embargoes and restrained by a further six European Union embargoes of various degrees of stringency. In addition, her Majesty's government was a signatory to an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) embargo agreement and restricted by two national embargoes.<sup>11</sup> Not all embargoes were comprehensive, with some articles being allowed to certain recipients but disallowed to others. In addition, not all of the rules of embargo were the same in respect to different targeted states. If embargoes are to provide the partial blueprint for future light weapons controls then they clearly need to avoid these pitfalls of over-complexity and confusion.

In order to succeed, microdisarmament must include both actors and process in its counter-proliferation strategy. The actors range from rogue governmental suppliers to corrupt officials to professional arms dealers to opportunistic criminals. No single tactic or policy of dissuasion will work for all of these players. The opportunists might be dissuaded by existing laws applied more effectively, but governments and certain corrupt officials exist beyond the laws of their own states. Professional arms traffickers exist in a world of avoidance and evasion. To persuade them to eschew the illicit and illegal arms marketplace will require them to be confronted by powerful negative consequences.

The most persistent rogue state supplier of light weapons has been Bulgaria. Well before the collapse of communism the state arms manufacturing and trading entities were exporting into zones of conflict for profit. During the Cold War, Kintex, the trading concern, was identified as a supplier to Libya, Angola, Yemen and to a number of opposing factions in the Lebanese civil war. After the fall of communism, Kintex and its production "partner" Arsenal, were implicated in arms sales to belligerents in the Yugoslav civil war, to both government forces and UNITA rebels in Angola, to Colombian drug cartels and to those responsible for the genocide in Rwanda. This pattern indicates that the Bulgarian arms industry hews

more to an export policy based upon economic realism (even after downsizing in the early 1990s the industry provides over 42,000 jobs) than it does to international convention.<sup>12</sup>

Rogue suppliers at the state level are difficult to control and deter. Very often the arms exports are part of an intricate arrangement between venal officials, organized crime and cash-desperate manufacturers against which diplomatic pressure or media vilification can have only a limited effect. In the case of Bulgaria, a desire to join NATO can and has been used as leverage to moderate uncontrolled arms exports, but that linkage has a finite life span. Perhaps a better approach would be to demonize the activities of the suppliers in the same manner as in the 1930s, when the concept of “merchants of death” led to investigations, legislation and a Nobel Peace Prize for Philip Noel Baker. The bright glare of such a spotlight might convince some of the traffickers that illegal arms trading is simply not worth the effort or the profits.

At a level below rogue supplier states are the private entrepreneurial traffickers. Intermixing legal, gray- and black-market activities, these are often former military or intelligence officers who parlay their knowledge and contacts into a lucrative export-import trade. Sometimes (although relatively rarely) they specialize only in arms trafficking. More often, they are involved in smuggling and counter-trading across a spectrum of commodities. The specialists themselves are often divided into sub-groups of dealmakers, and certification and transport experts. The first of these take orders from would-be recipients and act as middlemen between them and those that actually control the arms. Very rarely do traffickers control stocks of illicit arms themselves. The second group either creates fake end-use certificates (EUCs) or solicits corrupt government officials to create false EUCs. These documents are designed to act as a fail-safe device by indicating that an unconstrained sovereign government has contracted to acquire the arms. There is a trade in this paper (individual false EUCs are sold for \$50,000 to \$200,000) and such practices further serve to blur the line between legal, illicit and illegal transfers.<sup>13</sup>

Arms traffickers use a variety of means to transport light weapons to their customers. Cargo ships with onboard cranes are particularly valued, since cargo can be loaded and unloaded using small, less-policed ports with relatively primitive cargo handling capabilities. At various times the Danish coastal fleet, Cypriot and Greek registered craft and ships with Black Sea origins have been favored by traffickers. In addition, when time is important, the myriad of small, largely unregulated airfreight companies in the former

Soviet Union and Africa will move arms and munitions into areas of existing conflict. As an adjunct to this movement, the transportation specialists also provide their own documentation, often consisting of fraudulent bills of lading with false destinations attached.

Financing of these activities is most often accomplished through the banking systems of Switzerland, Luxembourg, Italy and Cyprus. Since most of the arms deals are often not recognizable as such (the cliché “machine parts” is still the preferred fig-leaf) banks can most times claim deniability. The Monaco branch of the notoriously-defunct Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) indulged profligately in the financing of arms transfers and banks in such diverse markets as Hong Kong, the Seychelles, Italy, the Caribbean and Lebanon have been identified as participants in gray- and black-market activities.<sup>14</sup> Given the nature of the trade, financing can often be tenuous and is many times a point of contention and an aspect of strain between customer, middleman and supplier.

In addition to rogue suppliers and professional arms traffickers, there are also actors who indulge in the activity as an adjunct to other commercial activity (most particularly mining) and some who are simply criminal opportunists. The former use arms as a way of cementing their relationship with pariah regimes whose resources they hope to exploit or to donate to sub-state actors to provide for security in the environs of their operations. The latter are often ill-prepared amateurs who frequently fall prey to authorities either in the country of arms origination or in the physical area of delivery. Together, these minor players are relatively insignificant in terms of numbers of deals generated, but some of their activities are in key areas of political instability and therefore their impact belies their overall numbers.

A final category of illicit/illegal proliferators is more difficult to categorize. These are the unregulated “cottage industry” manufacturers of small arms. They are to be found in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, in Danao in the Philippines, in the townships of South Africa and even in anti-gun Japan. In the NWFP the activity goes beyond “cottage industry” since towns such as Darra are economically dependent upon small-scale weapons production and in Danao more than a third of the population makes a living from gunmaking.<sup>15</sup> This, together with a tradition of autonomy in many gunmaking areas, makes the termination of what is mostly an illegal activity problematic in both economic and political terms.

Also, it must be acknowledged, few of these types of arms make their way out of the immediate area of manufacture, therefore it is more of a problem. But, such activities can and do sabotage efforts to control the availability of arms in areas of conflict and, as was indicated in East Timor, militias armed predominantly with homemade weapons can still achieve profound levels of destruction and intimidation.

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### **III. Anatomy Of A Deal**

On September 18, 1994, the Afrikaans-language South African newspaper “Rapport” published a story in which it accused the newly-formed ANC government of illicitly shipping arms to the Middle East in contravention of its own stated policy. The destination of the arms was purportedly the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The gist of the story proved to be true, but the South African government was not privy to the sale and the destination of the arms shipment was Yemen, not the PLO.<sup>16</sup>

The so-called “Wazan Affair” contained nearly all of the ingredients of a classic gray/black-market arms deal. Clandestine meetings, intelligence community associations, Swiss banks, forged documents and corrupt officials were all facets of the story. What makes the events between 1991 and 1994 more distinctive, however, was that they were subject to a government inquiry that was able to outline how arms traffickers conduct their business in the face controls and constraints. In the “Cameron Commission report,” published in June 1995, are some details of how a “deal” comes together, how the problems associated with documentation are solved and also, how things can go wrong.

During the Apartheid years, the isolation of South Africa had ensured that a clandestine network of suppliers for all the countries strategic needs was instituted as a commercial and security necessity. One important aspect of this network was an arms acquisition and sales effort. The latter was used to reduce the “pariah state” situation of South Africa and also to underwrite the cost of the country’s expensive military research and production program. By the final days of the Apartheid regime these arms-related linkages had expanded to include more than one hundred and thirty foreign-based front companies which were involved in the buying and selling of arms.

During the 1980s the South African defense forces discerned a need for Kalashnikov-type assault rifles. Working with the UNITA forces in Angola and with RENAMO forces in Mozambique, the South Africans found that it was far easier to standardize using Eastern-bloc weapons than to use their own small arms. Such arms were not identified with South Africa and could therefore be used in covert operations and they could also be given to their guerilla allies as military aid. In this regard, South Africa purchased 35,000 AK-type rifles (in fact, Type 56) from the People’s Republic of China (through the “Norinco” agency) between 1985 and 1989. In 1994 the bulk of these weapons remained in South Africa, nominally in South African



defense forces stockpiles, but in fact under the control of the government arms export agency, "Arm Scor." But some of the guns were not in the inventory because they had already been sold to belligerents in the Yugoslav civil war.

Eli Wazan had been a procurement officer for the Christian militias in Lebanon during the civil war of the 1980s. He was also closely associated with the Israeli intelligence community. In 1983-84 Wazan terminated his formal links with the militias and began to deal in weapons for commercial gain in East Beirut. During this time he formed another association, this time with Arm Scor. In time this relationship matured to the point that Wazan was appointed an "exclusive agent" by the South African body.

Wazan had an acquaintanceship with a naturalized German of Lebanese-Armenian extraction, Joseph der Hovsepian. In 1991, Wazan and Hovsepian, using Wazan's connections at Arm Scor, arranged for shipments of arms to be diverted from their nominal destination of Lebanon to Croatian and Serbian forces fighting in the former Yugoslavia. The transport of the second of these shipments was facilitated by Michael Steenberg, the American owner of "Dan-Am Shipping." Both deals relied upon "assistance" from within Arm Scor and this was provided by the manager of the stock sales department, Marius Vermaak.

In 1993 Hovsepian, acting on behalf of a Saudi prince, Anwar al-Shalaan, contacted Wazan with a view to the latter acting as a purchasing agent for AKs held by Arm Scor. The prince himself would be the real purchaser, but nominally Wazan would be acquiring the arms on behalf of a Christian militia (which had in fact been disbanded in 1989). Hovsepian would be the go-between, Michael Steenberg would be in charge of the transportation arrangements and Vermaak would be their "man" at Arm Scor.

The first tranche of this shipment (there were to be at least two) reached its real destination of South Yemen in late 1993. At that time the two Yemens were in a pre-war state, which was to metamorphose into open civil war in May 1994. Michael Steenberg had arranged the charter of a vessel, the "Vinland Saga" and although the bill of lading with the arms clearly identified Mokha, Yemen, as the destination this was not the document that had been shown to South African customs officials when the ship prepared to leave Port Elizabeth. Steenberg had created three draft bills of lading, only one of which showed that Yemen was the destination. The others were used to muddy the waters sufficiently that the ship had left port before any concerns had been raised.

The second consignment of arms left South Africa in September 1994. But circumstances had changed in the time between the two tranches and

when the arms arrived in Yemen they were rejected by the would-be recipient. In fact the entire episode of the second tranche had been fraught with difficulties. The prince, ostensibly nervous about Wazan's Israeli connections, had decided to cut the Lebanese out of the second part of the deal. This necessitated a face-to-face meeting with Vermaak in Switzerland in January 1994, at which the Saudi and Hovsepian haggled over the price of the second tranche with Vermaak. During this session Vermaak was offered a \$100,000 bribe, which he refused. Indeed, throughout the affair it appears that Vermaak was principally motivated by a desire to "make a sale" for Armscor.

Prior to May 1994 end-use certificates were not officially required for most arms transfers. But when the post-Apartheid government came into power EUCs became mandatory. Yemen was assigned a "Category 2" status, indicating that arms could not be sold to that country. It was necessary, therefore, for Wazan, who could provide the necessary EUC, to be brought back into the deal. He did provide a certificate but instead of being the promised genuine article, signed by a corrupt Lebanese official, it was a crudely faked document put together by Wazan himself. For this service he received a payment of \$50,000, disguised as a refund from Armscor. Steenberg again pulled a sleight of hand with the bills of lading, only releasing the document with the true destination (Hodeidah, Yemen) after the ship had sailed. The cargo was rejected by the Yemenis, the ship returned to South Africa and the story broke in "Rapport."

A government investigation, named the "Cameron Commission" after its chairman, convened in late 1994 and issued its findings in mid-1995. It came to the conclusion that the Wazan affair was quite typical of the clandestine arrangements that had involved Armscor and the South African arms industry under Apartheid. The commission's investigators had only limited access to the major players in the affair, but the international scope of the operation was obvious. A Lebanese arms dealer with Israeli intelligence connections, acting on behalf of a Saudi prince and a German citizen, suborned a South African official to sanction an illegal transfer of Chinese weapons to Yemen. The commission also found evidence that at one time all of the major parties (Wazan, the prince, Steenberg, and even" Vermaak) conspired to cheat each other over commissions or compensation, giving a clear indication of the tenuousness of such relationships.

Vermaak retired early from his job (he had, in the end, used a time-share condominium on Cyprus provided by Hovsepian and the prince and had accepted a donation to his daughter's special school). The prince had to sue the South African government for the retrieval of the impounded cargo from

the second tranche. Michael Steenberg continues to operate Dan-Am shipping out of offices in Wilmington, North Carolina. Some of the proposals to tighten South African arms export policy and regulation, articulated in the second part of the Cameron Commission report, have been put into effect.

The Wazan affair is the type of activity which is replicated almost continuously worldwide. Opportunists like the prince (his stated rationale for the endeavor was to open up commercial opportunities in Yemen) come together with middlemen and “fixers” like Hovsepian, Wazan and Steenberg and the whole is facilitated by a malleable official, in this case Vermaak. Many elements were illicit (the sale to Yemen, particularly in the context of the civil war) and some were illegal in respect of South African law (the false documentation). The principal penalties (Vermaak’s loss of position and the impoundment of the second cargo) were administrative rather than legal responses. When profits in the trade in light weapons remain so high (as far as can be determined everybody in the Wazan affair made a profit, with the exception of Vermaak) and penalties remain so low, then such activities will continue.

## **IV. Methods Of Constraint**

The scope and variety of proliferators of light weapons ensure that no single strategy will inhibit or defeat all of them. After consensus has been reached in the international community that uncontrolled arms transfers into areas of conflict are unacceptable then the complex problem of control and constraint begins. It is obvious, from the extant short history of microdisarmament, that a division of labor between IGOs, NGOs and state governments would, even on the basis of economy of effort, be a preferable first step. The United Nations, EU, OAS and Organization of African Unity (OAU) are more suited to creating an ambience of vilification than are single state entities. Even if the United States, as a superpower, condemns the illicit trade in light weapons, it has neither the omnipotent power nor the legitimacy to create a binding consensus between disparate states and cultures. Only multilateral institutions can make arms trafficking unacceptable and, through the creation of a body of international law, close the loopholes created by differentials between such states and cultures. This is, of course, easier said than done. The UN conference in 2001 may create enough impetus to place arms trafficking and microdisarmament in the forefront of issues, along with human rights, the global commons and the like. Or, it may simply provide a catharsis that quickly dissipates with little being accomplished.

The need for an accurate, accessible, comprehensive and shared database on light weapons issues is paramount. In order to be vilified and controlled, transgressors must first be identified and their actions cataloged. The United Nations (and the League of Nations before it) does not have a good track record in the matter of maintaining comprehensive arms trade databases. The current effort, the UN Register of Conventional Arms, is voluntary and aids little in the pursuit of transparency in arms transfers. An arms trafficking database, therefore, would either have to break this mold or be placed within another organizational context. It is arguable that regional IGOs, most particularly the EU, could better coordinate collection and collation of data but whether they would be completely willing to share such information outside of their geopolitical realm is itself debatable.

Traditionally, NGOs have not had the resources nor the inclination to engage in the gathering, collating and analysis of security-related data. However, on matters such as environmental degradation, refugee flows,

health issues etc., NGOs have proven that they have the capacity to be considerably effective contributors to discussions on complex and fundamental topics. What they lack in money and formal structure they make up for with energy and innovation. And already certain groups (Human Rights Watch, the Monterey Institute and South Africa's ISS) have demonstrated an aptitude for gathering primary data on light weapons issues. But before NGOs are encouraged to engage in what amounts to "soft" intelligence gathering, the implications behind such encouragement should be weighed carefully.

As non-state actors NGOs rely upon their non-threatening, non-explicit power for protection. Any compromise of this "apartness" could have serious ramifications for the ability of NGOs to operate in all but the most of benign environments. However, non-governmental organizations, unfettered by diplomatic politesse or any obligation to achieve consensus, can use data that they collect in a more direct manner than national governments or even IGOs. It is likely, therefore, that certain NGOs will act as primary data collectors in order to use the credibility that this gives them with governments and IGOs.

The traffic in light weapons has always been an "uncomfortable" intelligence target. Many states, particularly during the Cold War, used the supply of light weapons as an instrument of statecraft and most often their intelligence communities were involved in the activity. This helped to create two important residual effects. The "tools" of arms trafficking (the dealers, transporters, banks, etc.) were as often seen as an adjunct of operations as they were targets for investigation and control. Secondly, many intelligence officers built up a base of knowledge and acquaintanceship that they could parlay into post-government employment opportunity (and some did not wait until they had left government service). If not quite symbiotic, the relationship between arms traffickers and intelligence communities became entangled enough so that key traders could claim the patronage of intelligence agencies when it became necessary to defend themselves.

The relationship between traffickers in arms and intelligence communities, particularly in the United States and Western Europe, must be redefined if there is to be a serious attempt to control the proliferation of light weapons. If small arms traffic is to be controlled, the intelligence community cannot persist in playing the antagonistic roles of both gamekeeper and poacher. Also, if they remain players in the small arms trade, it is questionable whether their reporting of information will be complete and

totally honest. If moral outrage and demonization is also to be part of the anti-proliferation strategy, then, this too is undermined by intelligence communities if they use arms traffickers and protect them from discovery.

Much of the intelligence work dedicated to countering the spread of light weapons will be dominated by traditional human intelligence gathering. The volatile, preternaturally clandestine world of arms dealing requires a combination of traditional law enforcement techniques, combined with traditional intelligence gathering exercises. However, there is a role for technical intelligence, particularly in the area of signals intelligence and imagery.

Arms have to move in order to be sold. This movement can be monitored. Deals have to be brokered and this means that information must flow between the interested parties. Such information flows can also be monitored. Much of this observation can be accomplished by using the satellite and other technical capabilities available to advanced intelligence communities. But there is also an activity that has been particularly tailored to small arms trafficking and this could itself be broadened and deepened in order to gain a better picture of the movement of light weapons. This activity is sometimes called “jarking” but is more often termed “tagging.” It is the embedding of electronic devices in light weapons in order to be able to trace and monitor the movement and use of such weapons. With its origins in the work of the British Army’s Special Weapons Unit in Northern Ireland, “jarking” has received an important boost through the possibility of linking micro-miniaturization with satellite-related technologies. It could prove to be an important tool in the gaining of evidence concerning light weapons trafficking.<sup>17</sup>

The traffic in light weapons is in many ways two trades. The weapons themselves are the most obvious aspect of the trade but without ammunition, the weapons are rendered inert. Controlling the flow of ammunition may even be a more efficient way to use resources since the number of manufacturers of military-style ammunition are relatively few and readily identifiable. The large stocks of ammunition previously available from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have now been depleted by the conflicts in the Balkans, Caucasus and Africa and therefore most ammunition must now originate from original manufacturers. Aware of this, certain NGOs are concentrating upon pressuring ammunition manufacturers to increase casehead identification of rounds of ammunition so that illegal transfers can be readily traced back to the plant of origin.

The issue of end-use certificates (EUCs) should provide opportunities for action by anti-proliferators. Currently, each government creates its own documents for approval of arms shipments. These may range from legalistic, multi-page forms to a single page of idiosyncratically-spelled confirmation over an illegible signature, as in the Wazan affair. There is no repository for the validation of such documents and if they are emanating from a corrupt official then all inquiries could be stymied by that official. A general agreement on the form and substance of such documents, with the ability to check authenticity through access to a secure database, should not be beyond the capabilities of the international community. Sovereignty issues aside, the current EUC situation, exacerbated as it is by the volume of business (in 1990 the United Kingdom had 57 officials available to process 46,000 EUC applications), only benefits those that would abuse it. It should be tightened and rationalized even in the face of opposition from those that currently make money from the traffic in documentation.<sup>18</sup>

Arms are being stolen or are “lost” from the inventories of national militaries and law enforcement agencies in very high numbers. It is estimated that more than 8,000 weapons a year are displaced from the police and military arsenals in South Africa and enter the illegal market.<sup>19</sup> In Cambodia and the Caucasus troops have actually sold arms to those with whom they were in armed confrontation. Fundamentally, this is a matter of discipline in and political control over national militaries. Allowed to continue without repercussions, such behavior can have a corrosive effect upon the cohesion of a military and impair it in the performance of its security function.

The traffic in light weapons is principally about profit. As long as a round of 40mm ammunition sells at the Thai-Burma border for up to five times the cost it was bought for at the Thai-Cambodian border then the trade will be profitable and it will continue.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, as long as there is a prevailing sense that arms traffickers are simply “pirates of commerce” then the political will to constrain their activities will be absent. An analogy with the trade in drugs or humans is not inappropriate but the very bulk of arms shipments mitigates against them being moved completely clandestinely. There are many “choke points” in the journey from manufacturer/stockpile to use in the “Kalashnikov cultures” of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Such areas of vulnerability can be targeted and, through action, the profit margin can be narrowed. To accomplish even this limited level of expectation will require a high level of coordination and creativity from all counter-proliferation actors.

## **V. Arms Management, Decommissioning And Reclamation**

Even if light weapons counter-proliferation efforts were to be as successful as the landmines campaign there would still be a small arms problem. The hundreds of millions of weapons that are already in the hands of individuals will continue to act as agents of destabilization as long as they remain functional. The challenge in respect to these fielded weapons is how to retrieve and destroy them in an as effective and economical manner as possible.

Weaponized areas of the world leak arms into contiguous zones and sometimes across great distances. Cambodian arms have found their way to Sri Lanka, Mozambican arms have contributed to the destabilization of South Africa and Malawi, Aghani arms figure significantly in the gang warfare in Karachi.<sup>21</sup> Ironically, when wars end is the time of maximum danger from such seepage. Soldiers find themselves unemployed and their weapon (or knowledge of weapons caches) may be their only economic asset. Arms are sold or bartered (Russian soldiers exchanged their arms for food in Chechnya and in Mozambique assault rifles have been bartered for used clothing.) Arms are then moved across borders where they are sold to dissidents or criminals. In this way weaponized states can infect entire regions with “gun law” and have a profound effect on both short- and long-term stability.

Weaning entire societies away from dependence on the gun is predicated as much upon adequate tactics as it is upon the institution of a successful strategy. A perfectly feasible overall plan can easily be sabotaged by imperfect execution, by frustration or simply through insensitive handling. This failure is most evident in operations involving peacekeeping forces.

In Somalia in 1992 the UNOSOM I peacekeeping force attempted to engage in a “food for arms” exchange policy which alienated both NGOs and local factional leaders through its insensitivity to local conditions. The NGOs were upset about using food aid as an incentive and the Aideed faction felt that due deference had not been paid to their status as a legitimate force.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the U.S.-dominated UNITAF force and the later UNOSOM II effort gravitated between demanding the surrender of small arms to tacit acceptance of Somalia as a weaponized state. As one commentator noted ‘...UNOSOM demonstrated that UN peacekeepers are not suited for operations in a non-permissive environment requiring coercive disarmament.’ By implication, therefore, UN peacekeepers are only able to engage in disarmament in a permissive environment. But the UN experience



in Mozambique in the early 1990s indicated that, even after peace had broken out, the decommissioning of the former combatants was no simple task.

In 1992 two major factions in the Mozambican civil war, the government FRELIMO forces and the opposition RENAMO army, signed a peace accord after sixteen years of fighting. The United Nations established a presence through ONUMOZ, part of whose mandate was the "...collection, storage and destruction of weapons." The actual number of weapons in the hands of the populace was unknown (President Machel would hand out assault rifles at political rallies as largesse) but estimates ranged from six to eight million units. In many cases soldiers and rebels had more than one weapon which, when it came time for them to hand in a gun, allowed them to conform to the letter of the agreement while still remaining armed. But it was the failure to destroy surrendered weapons that ultimately undermined the efforts of ONUMOZ.<sup>23</sup>

The UN force claimed that it had retrieved 182,827 weapons during the disarmament operations. It placed these weapons into three regional depots, which were then guarded by ONUMOZ personnel. However, it then turned over these weapons to the new FRELIMO/RENAMO-manned Mozambican national army, which did not need even the amount of small arms that it currently controlled. Inevitably, these weapons leached back out into the marketplace. This experience, together with similar ones in Cambodia and Central America, underlined the advisability of destroying arms as soon as possible after their retrieval, otherwise the lure of profit from the sale of surplus arms will prevail.

The United Nations is dependent upon voluntary participation in weapons retrieval programs. It's representatives have neither the temperament nor often the mandate to confront those that would resist disarmament efforts. When illegal caches are suspected, the UN must rely upon the good graces of the local population to provide it with the necessary intelligence. To achieve a level of compliance it must, therefore, improvise with incentives rather than threaten with force.

Many civilian owners of light weapons consider them as a unit of commerce. At worst, they are tools for intimidation and banditry. At best, they are items that can be sold or bartered. This latter function can be utilized by IGOs, NGOs and national governments as a way of disarming a population. But it comes at a price.

Buy-in or buy-back programs have been an aspect of light weapons retrieval for much of the 1990s. Prior to this decade voluntary amnesties, with no legal penalty attached but also no financial incentive offered, had been prevalent, particularly in advanced industrial states. Buy-back programs had been tried, with varying success, in a number of U.S. cities in the 1980s but had not been an aspect of a light weapons control regime until they were popularized in Haiti, Panama and Australia.

In Haiti the United States military was confronted with the problem of a population that was both divided and armed. A declared objective of the United States, as head of the Multinational Force, was to “reduce the number of weapons, promote stability and provide monetary incentives to citizens who supported the (buy-back) program.” Using a sliding scale of prices for weapons (handguns: \$100; automatic weapons: \$400; crew-served weapons: \$600) the U.S. military was able to retrieve more than 33,000 weapons between September 1994 and March 1995, at a total cost of nearly \$2 million. Within the light weapons control community it is generally acknowledged as having been a success.<sup>24</sup>

However successful, Haiti cannot be used as a template for future buy-back programs. The nature of the Haiti operation allowed the U.S. military a degree of latitude that is not present in more traditional UN operations and the somewhat limited nature of arms availability (compared to the millions of arms in private hands in Mozambique) made a buy-back fiscally feasible. The level of discipline and control exerted by the U.S. military, combined with attractive prices for the guns, could not be replicated in areas more constrained by organizational and economic realities.

More limited incentive-based programs have been successful in El Salvador, Panama and Albania. A financial component has played a part in all three retrieval plans but it was not the major element in either of the countries. Instead, in El Salvador a grassroots organization, the Movimiento Patriótico Contra la Delincuencia (MPCD), emerged in 1996 out of a reaction to the impact of armed crime on commerce and business. Using Catholic Church facilities as collection points and \$1 million for financing, the MPCD exchanged “guns for good” by using a voucher system. These vouchers could be used in supermarkets, pharmacies and shoe stores and had values ranging from \$60 (handguns, vintage rifles) to \$350 for a functioning assault rifle. By the 17th round of this program (July 1998) nearly 8,000 weapons had been brought in and destroyed. In Panama, a more modest program offered foodstuffs, construction materials, domestic appliances and even the

possibility of employment for guns and had, by 1998, retrieved more than 100 firearms in the city of San Miguelito.<sup>25</sup>

In Haiti, El Salvador and Panama the incentive programs were aimed at the individual. If anything approaching market value is promised to the owner of the weapon then this can become prohibitive. After the Port Arthur massacre in Tasmania, the collective Australian state authorities decided to buy-in all self-loading and pump-action longarms, pledging close to market prices. The result was the collection of more than 500,000 firearms at a cost of more than USD\$220million, with the prices ranging from Aus\$60 to Aus\$10,000. In parts of the world with the greatest need for arms retrieval this level of personal compensation is highly unlikely. But another type of incentive program, based upon community benefit rather than payment to individuals, may be the answer for less-well financially endowed actors.<sup>26</sup>

In 1997 the government of Albania was confronted by a general uprising engendered by the collapse of a series of Ponzi-type fraud schemes. During the uprising, the arsenals of the national military and security forces were ransacked and the weapons were placed in the hands of the population. Estimations vary as to the number of arms looted but a figure of something more than 500,000 individual weapons is agreed upon. Less than 20% of those arms had, by early 1999, been retrieved by the Albanian authorities. The remainder had either been “exported,” most prominently to Kosovo, or remained in Albania in private hands. The result of such a proliferation has been a quantum increase in rural banditry, urban assaults, and the establishment of criminal fiefdoms in many parts of the country. Unable to create a retrieval program of its own, the central authority in Tirana petitioned the United Nations to help establish and promote a pilot project in the area of Gramsh in northern Albania.<sup>27</sup>

The UN Department of Disarmament Affairs (UNDDA) constructed a program around five key elements: symbolism, advocacy, community involvement and reward, voluntary surrender and possible public destruction of the weapons. It was the third element, of community involvement and reward, that was in many ways the most innovative element of the project. Instead of linking voluntary arms surrender to personal financial gain, the Gramsh project proposed that such surrender be seen as a community activity and be rewarded with assistance for community development needs. Through collaboration with the citizens of Gramsh, the UN identified collective needs and then offered assistance to help fulfill the requirements.

Weapons collection in Gramsh began in January 1999, was suspended for two months during the Kosovo crisis and then resumed in the summer of

1999. By July 1999 more than 2,600 weapons and 60 tons of munitions had been surrendered. In exchange, the UN had helped begin the construction a radio telephone system for Gramsh, rebuild the town post office, install street lighting and enact much needed road repairs. In parallel with the scheme a major publicity campaign aimed at educating the population about the program was promoted by the Albanian authorities and the UN. The second phase of the project had already been inaugurated by the summer of 1999, with a view to replicating the Gramsh experiment throughout Albania. Safety concerns (hand and rifle grenades have been brought to the Technical Support Team in an armed state) have been addressed, but the security of operators may become more difficult to assure in parts of the country that are considerably more lawless than Gramsh.

The Gramsh program may prove to be replicable beyond Albania. This type of incentive activity would appear to have validity in places such as Mozambique, Liberia, Cambodia and Guatemala. By combining arms collection with the renewal of civil society the UN in Gramsh appears (admittedly, the experiment is in its formative stages) to have achieved two objectives within a single project at relatively low cost (under \$1million to date). The only caveat is that prior to and during the Kosovo conflict the UN at Gramsh had to compete with arms traffickers for weapons and in many cases the arms traffickers were able to outbid the UN. The marketplace will tend to rule where demand is high. But this does not negate the important impact that the Gramsh pilot project might have on the direction of arms retrieval.

Gramsh may have been insecure but it was still a permissive environment. Seven years after the signing of the Mozambique peace treaty the hinterland of that country remains hostile even to the fiat of the government in Maputo. It also remains heavily armed, drawing on caches of arms that were hidden by both RENAMO and FRELIMO forces at the end of the conflict. Although many of the caches were buried, the arms remain serviceable and the ammunition useable. For the government in Maputo, the principal concern is over internal security (Mozambique is a potential tourist destination but the rate of rural armed crime is high and inhibiting). For neighbors such as Swaziland, South Africa and Malawi, the seepage of arms from Mozambique has helped to turn southern Africa into one of the worst areas for armed crime in the world.

In South Africa the post-apartheid era is challenged by the issue of dynamic social and economic change. The years of “the Struggle” elevated a lifestyle of violence up to the level of political resistance and the gun

became a symbol of commitment and resolve. In the post-Struggle era the symbolism has disappeared, but the culture and existence of the gun has remained. The result, exacerbated by under-education and high levels of unemployment (in many townships only there is only 20% full-time employment), has been a level of violence which threatens the very viability of South Africa as a functioning state. It has now, per capita, more murders than any country with the exception of Colombia and it has more rapes than any other state. Police stations are openly attacked in order to seize guns and the “taxi wars” in the major cities have claimed more than 1,000 lives. The crime has spawned an arms race, with more than four million licensed firearms in civilian hands and a concomitant increase in accidental shootings and suicide by firearm.

Many of the illegal firearms in South Africa are stolen from licensed owners or from the security forces. But a significant proportion of the military-style weapons which are favored by township gangs and “cash-in-transit” (armored car) robbers are traceable to Mozambique (one South African gang was found with five surface-to-air missiles in a vehicle by the South African police). It was this realization in 1995, together with Mozambique’s concern over its own inability to control armed crime within its borders, that gave rise to the South African-Mozambique agreement “In Respect of Co-Operation and Mutual Assistance in the Field of Crime Combating.” The most tangible aspect of this agreement has been the serious of activities known as “Operation Rachel.”<sup>28</sup>

The border between South Africa and Mozambique (including the Kruger National Park) is extremely porous. Gunrunners would buy arms from Mozambicans that had control over caches and then ferry them across the border by truck and four-wheel drive vehicle. The border area itself is lightly patrolled and road conditions make “hot pursuit” difficult. It was decided, therefore, to use the various capabilities of the Mozambican and South African security forces (South Africa was represented by a paramilitary element of the South African Police Service or SAPS and Mozambique by a combination of military and police) to identify and then conduct search-and-destroy missions against the Mozambican arms caches. The SAPS element was given permission to operate inside Mozambique, in coordination with Mozambican forces, and to eliminate all weapons caches that it could identify.

Identification itself was problematic. Standard maps were inadequate and the terrain mitigated against normal use of landmarks to identify the situation of caches. In order to overcome this problem, Mozambican

informants were given global positioning system (GPS) receivers, taught how to input way-points and these were then in turn plotted on GPS maps by the SAPS contingent. The informers themselves were key to the operations. After a “Rachel” operation was instituted (there had been four “Rachels” between 1995 and 1998) the informers provided guidance for the SAPS/Mozambican teams and acted as go-betweens with the local populations. No arrests were made during “Rachel” operations, partly for political reasons (most of the caches belonged to RENAMO or FRELIMO factions) and partly to encourage informers to come forward (informers were paid for their assistance). Arms were destroyed in situ and often in front of the local inhabitants as a propaganda exercise.

The SAPS contingents have had to adapt their tactics over the five years of “Rachel” operations. In 1999 the concept of a single annual event was being abandoned in favor of many smaller incursions. The controllers of the caches had become aware of the predictability of the “Rachel” calendar and had made arrangements to move their caches accordingly. Also military-style vehicles had been abandoned, partly to lower the profile of the operations, partly to help with the element of surprise and partly because they were cheaper to use and maintain. Helicopters have been used in support of “Rachel” but their ability to move quickly across difficult, often mined (when the SAPS units check where mines have been flagged they often find no mines underneath) terrain has been offset by their smaller carrying capacity and by the loss of surprise.

The four major “Rachel” operations have resulted in the destruction of nearly 12,000 individual firearms, 6,000 mines, 3 million rounds of ammunition and 7,000 mortars. The cost is not insignificant (R1.5 million was reportedly allocated for “Rachel” operations in 1999) and it will be harder to justify as these operations inevitably move farther north and away from the immediate vicinity of the South African border. Also, the law of unintended consequences has resulted in Mozambican arms being diverted to Zimbabwe and Malawi, where they are contributing to an upsurge in armed crime in both countries. Nevertheless, the “Rachel” activities have demonstrated that well planned and executed operations, maintained consistently and with adequate cooperation are possible between states that have a sufficient incentive to suspend sovereignty issues in pursuit of a common goal.

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## **VI. An Agenda For Microdisarmament**

Prior to any attempts to solve proliferation and collection issues, light weapons must be elevated to the same level of concern and action as the proliferation of WMD. For the United States there is a potential problem in this regard. Its domestic debate over firearm ownership could serve to detract from or undermine any leadership position that the U.S. government might want to take on light weapons matters. Certain actors in the U.S. gun control debate have already begun to participate in discussions on light weapons (the National Rifle Association has a small group looking at gun laws and gun ownership outside of the United States). But to confuse private gun ownership in the U.S. with the problem of “Kalashnikov cultures” and the chronically destabilizing impact of guns in other parts of the world is to unnecessarily blur the central issue. It is the proliferation of light weapons in tandem with the breakdown in order and authority which create “Kalashnikov cultures.” This negative symbiosis is what needs to be addressed, rather than engaging in an Amero-centric debate on the meaning of the Second Amendment or the definition of the rights of the individual in relation to the obligations of the state.

Early success protects an activity and can be built upon. In regard to light weapons proliferation efforts, success will mostly come in the form of multi-lateral agreement implemented over time. But certain decommissioning or collection programs could be instituted and successes achieved in a relatively short period of time. A replication of the Gramsh pro-rain in sub-Saharan Africa or in Asia might pay dividends within a year or eighteen months of inception.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of microdisarmament is the very acceptance of the concept. With the landmines campaign the devices themselves, insidious and non-discriminating, allowed for the debate over a global ban to be conducted almost entirely (with the exception of the U.S. position) at a level of moral indignation. But light weapons, while carrying a certain degree of stigma, are not as open to universal condemnation. Even the knowledge that light weapons have been the principal destructive device in 46 out of 49 armed conflicts since the end on the cold war has not been enough to galvanize the international community to global and universal action. However, the current campaign to link light weapons with the issue of child soldiers may provide sufficient impetus to overcome parochial security concerns. It remains to be seen whether the domestic political and



military agendas that drove U.S. decisionmaking on the landmines and Test Ban Treaty issues will dominate the light weapons debate.

After the initial awareness phase has been established then a coherent political strategy will need to be applied. This will need to pursue workable global, regional and state-based control regimes. The global, emanating from within the United Nations, would define and enshrine illicit arms activities within the context of international law. Definition, even of such a prosaic matter as to what constitutes a “light weapon,” is crucial to a successful campaign to solidify the concept of microdisarmament. Suppliers, dealers and recipients will all try to exploit any terminological inexactitude in order to evade the legal constraints of a control regime. Similarly, regulations and laws which now apply to explicit embargo situations need to be broadened to encompass illicit arms transfers to zones of conflict as a whole.

At the regional level, certain regulations specific to the conditions within regions could be applied. For example, if the European Union wishes to stress export policies based upon an admittedly Euro-centric view of ethical behavior then it could institute controls based upon that concept. It is also arguable that regulations formed at the regional (and state) level might be more enforceable than those that are achieved through the United Nations. Also the sharing of data and the pooling of enforcement resources can better take place at this level.

In an international system which still stresses the primacy of the state then much activity will still take place at that level. The control over dealers, shippers and middlemen can most times be best facilitated by states against transgressors. Certain national laws may need to be clarified (UK-based arms dealers were able to ship arms to Rwanda by exploiting the fact that the Channel Islands were not covered by a law embargoing arms to that country). Other controls, particularly in relation to the trade in false/fake documentation, may need to be placed into law. However, where states are themselves either the culprits or in league with them, then it cannot be expected that the necessary laws and enforcement will be forthcoming.

After awareness is raised and laws and regulations are put into place, the primary requirement is for a steady, coherent and universal application of the principals of microdisarmament. Political realists will argue for “exceptions,” particularly where groups plead for the uncontrolled distribution of arms for protection against tyrants or to help achieve self-determination. It will be difficult to withstand such blandishments, but the history of events in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America has indicated

that the road to chronic instability is paved with weapons that were provided for the best of short-term reasons.

The prospect of controlling and de-commissioning light weapons is admittedly daunting. Just achieving the necessary level of multilateral complicity is a formidable task. To coordinate intelligence and law enforcement assets to control the flow of illicit arms will also be difficult. Sopping up those hundreds of millions of arms that are already available throughout the world will, in itself, test the resolve of the international community. But the alternative is pools of unstable, weaponized “Kalashnikov cultures” that will themselves proliferate and spread the contagion of warlordism, massacre and genocide. It, therefore, seems an auspicious moment to expand the definition of counterproliferation to include light weapons and to make microdisarmament a priority at the onset of the new millennium.

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## Notes

1. Light weapons are defined as individual and crew-served weapons, including handguns, rifles, submachine guns, grenades, machine guns, grenade launchers, handheld rocket launchers, mortars and man-portable air defense systems.

2. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Agenda for Peace* (New York: United Nations, 1995), supplement.

3. The term “Kalashnikov culture” is said to have originated during the Lebanese civil war. Former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, used it on a number of occasions to describe conditions prevailing in her country in the 1990s.

4. Reuters, June 28, 1998.

5. In 1998 Bulgaria employed 42,000 people in over 100 arms factories. “Bulgaria: Money Talks,” *Human Rights Watch*, Vol 11, No 4, April 1999.

6. Perhaps the largest and most notorious countertrade is between the rebel UNITA forces in Angola and arms suppliers in Western and Eastern Europe. It is estimated that UNITA exchanges more than \$200 million a year in diamonds for weapons that include tanks, missiles and large quantities of light weapons. Francois Misser, “UN Drive to Track Secret Gem Trafficking Gathers Momentum,” *Business Day (South Africa)*, April 21, 1999.

7. Organization of American States, *INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION AGAINST THE ILLICIT MANUFACTURING OF AND TRAFFICKING IN FIREARMS, AMMUNITION, EXPLOSIVES AND OTHER RELATED MATERIALS*, 24th Special Session, General Assembly, November 13, 1997, Washington DC.

8. Council of the European Union, *European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports*, Document 8675/2/98 REV 2,5, 5 June 1998.

9. Interview with Sarah Meek, International Alert, July 1999 and with William Godnick, Monterey Institute/Prepcom, March 1999.

10. Eric David Newsom. *Small Arms Use and Proliferation: Strategies for a Global Dilemma*, (Washington DC: United States Information Agency, September 1, 1998).

11. Inter-Departmental Committee, *Trafficking in Arms: Controls and Procedures*, HMSO, United Kingdom, 1996.

12. Peter Fuhrman, “The Bulgarian Connection,” *Forbes*, April 17, 1989; Raymond Bonner, “Bulgaria Becomes A Weapons Bazaar,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1998.

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