

Disarmament

“Tackling the Illicit Flow of Small Arms & Light Weapons in Mexico”

Forum: Disarmament
Issue: Tackling the Illicit Flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Mexico
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I. Context and Historical Background

The illicit trade of small arms and light weapons around the world, is a no doubt a multi-billion dollar business. In light of the extensive amount of human suffering facilitated by the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons to the general public, including highly present violent drug traffickers. The issue of combating small arms, and light weapons was first raised in the United Nations General Assembly in 1995. The trade and availability of these small arms, have only worsened the preexisting conflicts and human rights violations. A key concern of most U.N resolutions and activist groups is the harmful effect of small arms and light weapons on civilians who often are helpless, and do not have the means to protect themselves against such harmful weapons. These weapons pose a dangerous threat to societies, enabling killing, rape, torture and the enlisting of child soldiers. It has led to an increase in the prevalence of crime, especially in Mexico, a country with extensive drug problems. The illicit weapons perpetuate and empower the drug-related violence that has become a disruption in the world community.

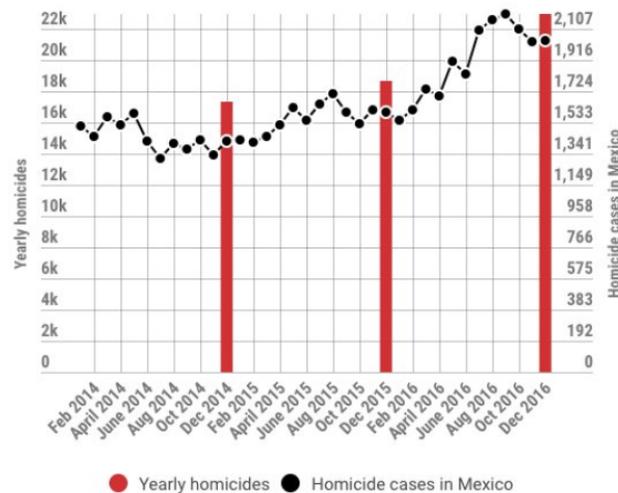
According to a report by Mexico's Government on arms circulating within its country, over 2000 small arms and light weapons cross the U.S-Mexico Border daily in addition to the fact that 85 percent of these 15 million weapons in circulation are reportedly illegal (Gagne). The consequences of such unregulated trade, are such that these illegal weapons are used for criminal activities, violence, and intimidation for criminal purposes. In Mexico, the possession of arms by drug traffickers is persistently common, as it is a necessity for protection and security reasons during movement while in possession of drugs. Possession of trafficked arms is involved from the cultivation of drugs to the delivery of these drugs, all supported by armed bodyguards. The financial factors that lead to this problem are also evident— drug trafficking often generates extensive proceeds cultivating a financial base for local criminal and drug cartels to conduct illegal traffic of arms and *vice versa*. As stated by Sergio Duarte, a representative for Disarmament Affairs in 2010, “The global scourge from the illicit trade in small arms and ammunition continues to wreak havoc and is highly destabilizing, impacting upon security and development in literally all regions of the world.” (“Global Scourge”).

Historical Background

As a result of the Cold War, Marxist groups in Latin America were left with an assortment of arms left by the American troops who withdrew from Vietnam. For example, the LAW rockets traced back to U.S Military Stocks, were used in multiple attacks by Latin American groups. These weapons have been used frequently in Mexico. After decades of uncontrolled small arms trade, there are over 45 million to 80 million small arms circulating throughout Mexico, and Latin America operated by individuals and small groups, most commonly drug groups (NACLA).

Due to Mexico's vast coastline, densely forested landscape, permeable borders, furtive airstrips, extensive corruption present in the government, the absence of governmental resources and political resources to tackle the arms trade, as well as the precedes of powerful drug-traffickers, the unregulated flow of weapons has thrived in Mexico. The consequences of uncontrolled small arms are highly evident, and have caused the increase in firearm homicides and increasing gang violence, as illustrated in the graph below (Reuters).

Homicide victims in Mexico, 2014-2016



Source: Mexican National Public Security System
Note: Mexico has only released data for homicide victims since 2014

In recent times, Guerrilla movements, street gangs, and organized criminal syndicates perpetuate the demand for guns through competition, intimidation, and violence, and this has overall exacerbated the need for more control over this situation.

Ratified in 1998, Mexico is involved in the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition, explosives, and other related materials, The OAS Convention. This has motivated the Mexican Government to take action against this conflict.

II. UN Involvement

- The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was adopted by resolution 55/255 of 31 May 2001 at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Ratified by Mexico on 10 Apr 2003.
- Latin American countries have also minimally complied with the voluntary UN Programme of Action on small arms and its International Tracing Instrument which was used for governments to agree upon, in order to improve national small arms laws, import/export controls, and stockpile management.
- Resolution 71/48 : The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. Adopted by the GA on 5 December 2016.
- Resolution 63/23: Promoting development through reduction and prevention of armed violence.

III. Different Perspectives

Mexico

UNLIREC has partnered with Mexico to promote different approaches in which the Mexican Government can successfully implement the UNPA on small arms and the Arms Trade Treaty. The Mexican Government is focused on find ways to reduce this illicit trade, as well as combat

the side effects of this trade including its connection with the drug trade as well. However progress cannot be pursued due to the fact that although Mexico has in fact ratified all UN international treaties and conventions, its Constitution grants its citizens the right to own firearms. On June 3, 2014, Mexico signed the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as ratifying the Arms Trade Treaty on September 29, 2013. It has similarly issued a statement of provisional application of Article 6 and 7 regarding the Treaty.

United States of America

In late 2016, President Donald Trump, “No one wins in either country when human smugglers and drug traffickers prey on innocent people, when cartels commit acts of violence, when illegal weapons and cash flow from the United States into Mexico.” Due to the U.S’s free gun laws, Mexican criminal organisations or individuals have the potential to stock their arsenals.

The French Republic

The French Republic has strict gun laws, regarding both exports and imports of small arms and light weapons. The activities of small arm brokers are legal, but heavily regulated by French Law, and licensing.

IV. Key Words

Small Arms and Light Weapons

As defined by the UN International Instrument (II), “Small arms are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for individual use. They include, inter alia, revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns and “Light weapons” are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for use by two or three persons serving as a crew, although some may be carried and used by a single person. They include, inter alia, heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of a caliber of less than 100 millimetres.”

V. Questions to Consider

- Do regulations regarding International Security include that on small weapons?
- How effective are the current methods of implementing UN resolutions?
- What are the effects on civilians as well as bordering countries of such trade, and how can these be controlled or limited?
- How might the international community combat the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons in Mexico?
- The small-arms and light weapons trade lacks full transparency in the international community, how might a member state estimate the quantities of weapons that Latin American countries import?

VI. Bibliography & Useful links

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