

as of September 1998.¹¹¹ A police official in Mindanao interviewed recently explained that since the firearms are often kept inside residences, they cannot be sequestered.

In the 1970s, for instance, the Government experience in disarming the populace proved to be something of a failure. Under national policy, all civilians were required to surrender their firearms during the Martial Law years. However, many Muslim communities resisted this imperator. While the Army initially launched "house to house searches for hidden arms" three months later they were forced to abandon the offer of amnesty for the rebels and instead focussed their efforts on the secessionist groups. [In this effort, the government failed to take into account the socio-religious importance of such weapons for Muslims, something which made the concept of surrounding such weapons outrageous to them."¹¹²]

Further, in a society like Mindanao, characterized as a "weak state and a strong environment", it is very hard to implement state policies for a variety of social reasons.¹¹³ A significant factor is the presence of corruption in the government such that even the police often cannot enforce the law. Under such conditions, the people are typically apathetic to any government program.¹¹⁴

Thus, while it is widely known that most individuals in Mindanao possess unlicensed firearms, the general consensus among those studying the Mindanao conflict is that it would take decades or even a century to change the culture that makes possession of firearms a necessity.

Despite these difficult conditions, the Government still strives to address the problem through the following measures:

1. The issuance of licenses to former illegal firearms manufacturers, such as the Danao Arms Manufacturing Corporation (DAMANCOR) and the Workers' League of Danao (WORLD);
2. The creation of the National Law Enforcement Coordinating Council (NALECC) Sub-Committee on Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives for the coordination of the efforts of all law enforcement and intelligence agencies as well as the intensification of information gathering and search activities;
3. Stricter implementation of firearms laws and regulations by conducting random inspections of stores, requirements for detailed inventories, site visits and stricter pass or transport

¹¹¹ According to FED as cited in *The Philippine Star* (22 March 1999).

¹¹² T. J. S. George, p. 191.

¹¹³ Interview with Prof. Kalidtod.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*