

This clearly raises concerns internationally over the prospect of South Africa's becoming a source of arms proliferation, especially in the developing world, for which most of its weapons systems are particularly appropriate. However, the Government has adopted a policy of constraint in line with its overall foreign policy framework, and has established a cabinet-level National Conventional Arms Control Committee which has to approve each proposed sale. It has so far adopted a restrictive policy (for example, turning down a major deal with Turkey on the grounds of that country's human rights record), but it should be noted that the Committee takes each proposal on a case-by-case basis, potentially opening the way for a less restrictive approach.

'Micro Disarmament'

Many NGOs in the region have drawn attention to the importance of the trade in light weapons, which are highly destabilizing and in part responsible for an escalation in crime and banditry. While there are no statistics on the size of the trade, it is believed to be significant. The principal flow is currently from Mozambique to South Africa, and to a lesser extent from Angola to South Africa.¹⁸ In Mozambique inadequacies in the UN demobilization process left vast numbers of weapons in the hands of former combatants; many of these have been sold to smugglers who take them into South Africa where they are fuelling domestic crime and political conflict, especially in KwaZulu-Natal.

The proliferation of small arms in South Africa is, however, not merely a result of cross-border smuggling. The domestic arms industry produces a variety of light weapons, ranging from handguns to automatic weapons, many of which are sold to the public and which subsequently fall into criminal hands (there are over three million licensed firearms in the country). The church-linked NGO Gun-Free South Africa has campaigned for tighter gun-control laws and, while it has rejected a buy-back scheme as too expensive and problematic, it launched a (largely

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¹⁸*Daily News*, 16.4.96.