

Document and the UN's Department for Disarmament Affairs in New York is responsible for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Any regional or global light weapons register will likely require the employment of a similar central administrative secretariat.

There are three ways in which this staff can be constructed. The classic way is for an international organization to form a staff at its offices, equipped with appropriate communications and automated data processing (ADP) support. A second approach may be for a participating nation or nations to contribute "in kind" to the common good and provide the necessary facilities and personnel. A third way is to "contract out" the task to a third party who can do the necessary work.

The first method may be useful if the existing organization has the requisite infrastructure which can be used. For instance, the United Nations, the OSCE or the OAS might be able to incorporate a light weapons register staff onto their existing bureaucracy, using communications, ADP and personnel already in location as a basis for the new activity. Some cost will, of course, be involved but expenses may be kept low if some of the existing organization's expertise, existing infrastructure and spare capacity are used. On the other hand, today most organizations are aiming to downsize and create savings, not expand. There may be no spare capacity. Existing organizations also come with existing reputations and may not be popular in all quarters. If the light weapons register is developed as a multilateral initiative among countries outside the umbrella of an existing global or regional organization, or if the organization has no spare capacity, staff or facilities, this option may not be viable.

If one or a few nations, either within or outside the group of participating nations, were to offer their assistance in the form of staff and equipment to run the light weapons register, certain advantages and disadvantages accrue. The facilitator nation could be an honest broker, if it did not have interests in the region, but this becomes a moot point if the light weapons register becomes a global initiative. There is always the danger of a facilitator nation's motives being misunderstood or misconstrued, thus leaving the arrangement vulnerable to charges of maladministration or worse. Depending upon the size of the register, it may be a contribution which is too large for some nations who would otherwise be acceptable to the majority of participants. Policies in countries change, as do their national interests, and a country could find itself wishing in future to divest itself of a responsibility which it may come to find to be too onerous. If the register became too large, a facilitator country could find itself with a growing commitment far out of proportion to the one initially assumed.

A secretariat could be formed from nothing but this would entail organizational development and infrastructure creation from what may be disparate sources. One possible way is for the participating nations to "contract out" the operation of the light weapons register to a private corporation or to an existing non-government institution. Commercial corporations exist which could organize and manage such a register for participants. Indeed, the United Nations and international aid agencies have used a number of commercial firms to provide support for peacekeeping and economic development projects around the world. The major drawback is that