

SECTION I -- ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

1. ARMS TRANSFERS

BACKGROUND

Post-war efforts to seek agreement on the limitation or regulation of arms transfers have been limited. The Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM), which consists of the NATO countries minus Iceland plus Japan and Australia, has been effective in controlling exports to communist countries. Broader efforts to create regional or multilateral controls on arms transfers, however, have until recently received little support. After a number of unsuccessful resolutions in the UN General Assembly, in 1988, a Colombian initiative co-sponsored by Canada, requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of members on the question of international arms transfers, and thereafter to carry out a study, with the assistance of governmental experts, on means of promoting transparency in international arms transfers. As a consequence of this resolution, the Secretary-General established the Group of Governmental Experts on Arms Transfer Transparency, which is expected to submit its report to the Secretary-General during the fall 1991 session of the General Assembly.

According to figures published in May 1991 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the global value of trade in major conventional weapons fell in 1990, declining approximately 35 percent from 1989 levels to an aggregate value of approximately US \$21.7 billion. According to the SIPRI Yearbook, 55 percent of arms deliveries were to Third World countries. The United States and the Soviet Union accounted for 69 percent of the value of the total trade, with the United States increasing its share from 34 percent in 1989 to 40 percent on 1990, while the Soviet share dropped from 37 percent in 1989 to 29 percent in 1990. In June 1991, a study released by the Office of Technology Assessment, an agency created to undertake independent studies for the US Congress, found that in 1988 (the last year in which figures were available), the United States exported US \$14.3 billion worth of weapons, three times more than the combined total of all other NATO countries. In the same year, the United States transferred to foreign countries production technology for seventy major weapons systems. According to Ruth Leger Sivard's *World Military and Social Expenditures 1991*, from 1969 to 1988, five of the top ten arms importers were countries in the Middle East.

These figures, which might otherwise have passed with little political notice, were thrown into sharp relief by the Gulf War. The 1991 SIPRI Yearbook calculated that during the 1980s, Iraq imported US \$27.369 billion worth of weapons, 55 percent of which came from the USSR, 19 percent from France, and 8 percent from China. Although the United States was not a leading arms supplier to Iraq, a report presented to Congress by the Commerce Department on 11 March 1991 listed licences approved for sales to Iraq by the US Administration between 1985 and 1990. The total value of the