

and public safety concerns. In general, it would be safe to say that the newer developments in firearms intended for military and security forces will be denied to civilians in a growing number of states. Such measures, however, do not obviate the risk that these weapons could fall (with or without state complicity) into the hands of various non-state actors, including criminals – particularly in those states with poor firearms regulations and enforcement capabilities, inadequate public security measures and/or an ongoing civil insurrection.

## RECENT SALW INNOVATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT

Small arms developments, like any other technology, take some time to move from the conceptual level, through R&D, and then into production and operational use. This section will review recent SALW innovations, some of which have existed in various development stages over many years. In an effort to avoid lengthy descriptions, Annex B contains pictures of various generations of military small arms and Annex C contains a table with a brief description of their characteristics and the general time frame of service within most armies.

As stated earlier, small arms development is largely evolutionary. The new weapons entering service today do not generally offer decisive advantages over the previous generation of small arms which they may be replacing or supplementing – in other words, “the basic infantry rifle has yet to be redefined”.<sup>43</sup> That having been said, newer systems do offer some unique advantages in terms of compactness, reliability, magazine capacity, rates of fire, new ammunition capabilities (in some cases), and – most significantly – improved ancillary equipment (particularly sights).

In 1989, NATO formulated a requirement for a “Personal Defence Weapon” for the post 2000 period. The stated requirement was for a weapon that

“should be... lighter, more durable, should make use of the latest state-of the art materials; easy to handle, require minimum maintenance; feature reduced audible and visible signature; a multi-purpose weapon with modular design – all with the objective of reducing the variety of different weapons and fire control systems in a unit.”<sup>44</sup>

Before looking at the prospects for such a multi-purpose personal weapon system, a review of small arms that are replacing or have recently replaced such notable firearms as the AK-47 and AK-74, the H&K G 3, and the FN FAL is warranted.

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<sup>43</sup> Terry J. Gander (ed). *Jane's Infantry Weapons (24<sup>th</sup> edition) 1998-99* (Jane's Information Group Ltd., UK, 1998). All of the small arms discussed in this paper are referred to in this edition. I have used *Jane's* sources, together with *Soldier of Fortune Magazine* articles (good for field assessments) and several Internet Sites such as [http://members.xoom.com/russian\\_arms](http://members.xoom.com/russian_arms); and <http://www.remtek.com/arms>

<sup>44</sup> See NATO Document AC 225 (16 April 1989).