

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of possibilities for ameliorating some of the concerns raised above with regard to developing and/or potential trends involving SALW. In some cases, the mechanisms are already in place. All that is required is the political will which will allow officials to more rigorously implement existing regulations, codes and declarations. Almost all of the SALW discussed in this paper are sold only to governments or their agents. If they become part of the SALW problem, governments will thus be primarily responsible. With regard to new ammunition, now is the time to proscribe their commercial non-government sale where appropriate or perhaps even to ban their production and/or acquisition outright to select state or non-state actors. Most new weapons are not cheap when compared with the older used models now circulating in the millions. However today's new small arm is tomorrow's used one. The use of synthetics versus expensive machined steel in the construction of new weapons makes them comparatively cheaper to manufacture than older models constructed through similar assembly process. In some cases, it may not be possible to realistically achieve anything until we possess a clearer picture of what is unfolding and what impact, if any, these developments have on stated SALW concerns. In other instances, it may be time to look more closely at the "rules of war", together with constraints or proscriptions on certain ammunition, be they kinetic, chemical or directed energy. What follows is a summary of observations and recommendations concerning the facts and issues raised in this paper.

Destruction of Older Inventories

It is apparent that the next generation of small arms and light weapons are already starting to enter the inventories of many states. This has the potential to once again encourage the diffusion of the SALW being replaced to other states and non-state actors in a cascading effect through arms dealers and state-to-state sales and transfers. In order to control the potential for a undesirable pattern of excessive accumulation and/or dispersal of these weapons (something which in turn could contribute to national, regional and global instability), consideration should be given to encouraging declarations (preferably agreements) that any acquisitions of new SALW to replace existing items be offset by the destruction of older equivalent items under international supervision, observation or any other appropriate accounting procedure.

This suggestion is perhaps more easy to introduce now than ever before, considering the world-wide downsizing of most military forces throughout the world. It can be applied to all states, SALW producers and non-producers alike. Its implementation can be voluntary or form the basis of a formal agreement negotiated at a national, regional or global level. It can involve cooperation between both the supplier and recipient countries and could place equal responsibility on both parties in this regard. It could encompass a situation where concerned supplier states could offer incentives to buyer states to cooperate in the implementation of such an agreement (See Box 1). Finally, it could assist in addressing two problems identified in the UN Panel paper – theft from storage facilities, and the dispersal and diffusion of weapons