

## **LIGHT WEAPONS REGULATION CONTROLS -- A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE.**

Firearms regulations at first glance would appear primarily to be a national concern based on the views, desires and requirements of a country's domestic constituents. If that is the case, then there would seem to be little relation to the international community. However, it is indeed difficult to address the issue of destabilizing light weapons proliferation within the context of intrastate conflict without taking into account the effect or non-effect of national fire arms regulations, and other pertinent regulations particularly transfer control and illicit movement across international borders.

UN "Guidelines for International Transfers"<sup>57</sup> suggests that states should, among other things: ensure adequate legislation on arms transfers including effective import and export licences; provide for sufficient numbers of customs officials; and define what weapons are appropriate for military use only. At the international level states are encouraged to cooperate in combating illegal arms sales; comply with UN embargoes; require verifiable end-user certificates; regulate private arms dealers and report all relevant transactions to the UN Register of Conventional Arms.

A review of Canadian policy, legislation and enforcement mechanisms indicates that Canada has met or exceeded the criteria as established by the UN. Annex C contains a synopsis of Canadian regulations pertaining to the control of light weapons with special emphasis on automatic firearms.

### **Domestic Firearms Legislation**

The domestic regulation of firearms in Canada bears mention as it may have applicability to other states for ameliorating intrastate conflict -- political or criminal. Canada has recently undergone a lively debate on the merits of greater control over personal firearms particularly as it focuses on universal gun registration. The outcome of this was the passage of bill C-68 by the Federal Government making it compulsory to register all privately owned firearms, prohibiting some handguns that were previously legal, and making it more difficult to own firearms if the owner has not had requisite training or is believed to be a risk to themselves or others if they possess firearms. The legislation also establishes more severe penalties for crimes in which firearms are used. The Firearms Act will take effect over a period of several years -- universal registration will be fully in effect by the year 2003, so it will be some time before it can be analyzed in terms of its success in reducing gun related casualties.

When applying the Canadian experience in regulating domestic firearms, it should be remembered that Canada has had a long history of some form of firearms control and an

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<sup>57</sup> UN General Assembly. *Report of the Disarmament Commission*. UN General Assembly Document A/51/42, 1996, Annex I