

equipment. Second, the signing of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty ensured that other major powers suddenly had surplus stocks available for sale (e.g., European states). Third, the UN is not able to control the small-scale intrastate conflicts which have become the norm in the post Cold War world. Finally, the global nature of trade has facilitated the creation of illicit smuggling networks which traffic in light weapons.

Light weapons are unique in several respects. Unlike major conventional weapons systems, they are not easily traceable using satellites. In addition, they are inexpensive to procure, thereby opening up the field to a wide range of participants. To date, suppliers of light weapons suffer virtually no consequences (e.g., in the form of economic sanctions). However, the humanitarian consequences of light weapons proliferation are pronounced.

Laurance offers several proposals to confront the problem of light weapons proliferation:

- 1) create an international norm which emphasizes the negative consequences of light weapons proliferation;
- 2) explore the potential benefits of widespread gun buy-back programs;
- 3) add small arms (particularly landmines) to the existing United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

He concludes by emphasizing the need for the United States to participate in improving the competence of the UN to solve international security problems.

**525.** Laurance, Edward J. *Surplus Weapons and the Micro-Disarmament Process*. Research Report Prepared for the UN Centre of Disarmament Affairs (UNCDA). Monterey: Monterey Institute of International Studies, 1995.

Laurance describes several definitions of small arms and light weapons. First, "...those which can be carried by an infantry soldier or perhaps a small vehicle or pack animal" (p. 2). Second, "...those weapons which do not need elaborate logistical and maintenance capability, and can be employed by insurgent groups and paramilitary formations" (p. 2). However, he maintains that a more useful definition requires "...an analysis of the weapons actually used in conflicts around the world [to] provide an empirical answer -- hand guns, carbines, assault rifles, submachine guns, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, light anti-tank missiles, small caliber mortars, shoulder-fired antiaircraft missiles and hand placed mines" (p. 2).

He cites four reasons offered by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for the accumulation of weapons:

- 1) earlier supply during the Cold War;
- 2) internal conflicts;
- 3) competition for commercial markets;
- 4) criminal activity and the collapse of governmental law and order.

The background to the internal conflict in El Salvador is described. Gun buy-back programs are examined as a practical method of micro-disarmament. Laurance outlines several aspects of potentially successful buy-back programs:

- 1) they must be implemented in conjunction with other plans which address the basic causes of crime and poverty;
- 2) they must be coordinated with efforts to enhance the operational capacity of police forces;
- 3) they must recognize that there are other objectives besides limiting the number of weapons in a society (e.g., promote community solidarity).

A tentative plan to implement a buy-back scheme in El Salvador is detailed. Laurance recommends beginning the process by collecting hand grenades. This early focus is advocated for several reasons:

- 1) these weapons are purely military in character and are not easily reproduced by criminals;
- 2) there are a finite number of grenades in circulation;
- 3) eliminating hand grenades would not deprive law abiding citizens of the weapons they consider essential to their protection;
- 4) targeting hand grenades decreases the likelihood of innocent civilians being harmed.

Laurance concludes that a "...buy-back program in El Salvador may provide a prototype that can be applied to other situations, and put some teeth into the concept of micro-disarmament" (p. 4).