

## **Commercial Lasers**

The use of military lasers (including ancillary laser sighting and targeting equipment for small arms and fire arms) is clearly an issue of concern: however, the misuse of laser equipment not originally designed to create casualties (for the purpose of creating casualties) must also be considered. In Trail, British Columbia, a motorist suffered eye injuries from a laser light that was shone into his rear view mirror from a vehicle traveling to the rear. The laser tool in question was a laser pointer designed for use in the classroom and for highlighting presentations from overhead projectors.<sup>110</sup> Governments and manufacturers will have to deal with this issue. Several US municipalities have already banned the use of laser pointers.

## **Technology Diffusion**

As can be seen in Annexes C and D, small arms and light weapons manufacturing activities are not limited to Europe and North America. Near-state-of-the-art-manufacturing is being carried out in a number of countries throughout the world. A similar situation applies to laser technology and other non-lethal weapons systems. Considering improvements in and the proliferation of micro-chip and dual use machinery technology, together with an ability on the part of an increasing number of groups to program manufacturing machinery using CD-ROM and other technologies, the potential for the diffusion of capabilities increases significantly. There are several aspects of SALW diffusion which, if not recognized, have the potential to undermine efforts at future solutions. First, if it is assumed that the South is where the demand and victims exist and that the North is the source of supply, then there is significant potential for a North/South split and a polarization on views concerning this issue. Second, the same split may encourage denials on both sides – in the North that they too are victims, and in the South that they are also responsible for the situation (including the production, acquisition and supply of SALW). It is imperative that solutions focus on all manufacturing states and all supplier states.<sup>111</sup> If solutions are sought on the basis of the North acting as the suppliers and the South as the users, then the best that will happen is a short-term disruption in supplies and a potential for an even greater diffusion of production. All parties must see themselves as both part of the problem and the solution. The issue of the ease of diffusion of SALW must also be kept in mind with regard to embargoes, as they have often inadvertently contributed to diffusion by encouraging states to become self-sufficient. This can also happen with new technologies.

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<sup>110</sup> "Laser Shot Hurts Driver," *National Post* (2 January 1999), p. A4.

<sup>111</sup> It is important to note that any state that owns SALW, whether manufactured there or not, is a potential supplier state.