

A Compliance Mechanism

Some arms control treaties and other agreements encompass some form of compliance assessment. These may take the form of formal monitoring or verification procedures as is found in the CFE Treaty or they may be of a more informal nature. The opposite is typified by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms in that there is little or no formal monitoring function. There is no recourse for participants to query data and no mechanism to inspect on-site in a participant's sovereign territory.

It is probable that a light weapons register would be voluntary in nature. It is also uncertain what would be the nature of the obligations — if any — incurred by the participants in such a register that would require a mechanism for compliance monitoring. Hence, whether a formal compliance mechanism is needed may depend on the specific context of the register. That being said, it would be very useful for the successful operation of the register, if some mechanism was established to encourage reports, including nil reports, to be submitted on time and in the proper format. It is conceivable that individual states might undertake such gentle "compliance reminders". However, it would seem more efficient to centralize this function, because a central secretariat would probably have more convenient access to all submissions by participating states.

Analysis of Data

Each member state can do its own analysis as to the effectiveness and content of the register, to the degree it so chooses, using the data which is shared among participants. From this, participating states can take action as they see fit in their own interests, including for example bilateral consultations or raising questions in a consultative forum.

Consideration might also be given to having a comprehensive analytical capability incorporated into the operation of the register. Again, a centralized function would likely be cost-beneficial and, in particular, could allow poorer or smaller nations to gain the same quality and quantity of analysis as more powerful participants. A centralized analytical function should be more objective in its results, avoiding the temptation to distort data for national purposes. Some states, however, would likely continue to conduct their own analysis for their own purposes. Deciding on the level of analysis that would be permitted such a central agency might be an issue for negotiation. From the point of view of operational effectiveness of the register allowing summary compilations, adjusting national submissions to ensure proper format, and other basic analytical undertakings should, at least, be undertaken by the central agency.

It is probable that a light weapons register would attract the attention of the NGO and academic communities and that, as in the case of the UN Register of Conventional Arms, some organizations would take upon themselves an information or analysis function. While this activity would probably be a useful source of information for policy makers and the public, these groups