

focussing a register on military style weapons such problems may be reduced. It is this type of weapon which appears to cause the most casualties and the greatest domestic and international instability. As a result, they are likely to be of most concern.

The 1997 report of the UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms made an arbitrary delineation of weapons into a number of categories. These included some weapons which could be used by civilians for legitimate pursuits as well as by criminal or insurgent elements for more nefarious purposes.¹¹ One problem in making a light weapons register acceptable to the maximum number of countries, and the interested groups therein, will likely be reaching agreement on those weapons for which there may be legitimate uses in a country and those which are clearly beyond the type needed by citizens for security and recreation, assuming that there is a functioning and stable government in a nation.¹²

International attention is focussing upon increasing the transparency of those light weapons and munitions which are primarily designed for and used by military or security forces.¹³ These sorts of weapons are characterized by high rates of fire and/or larger calibres, as well as purpose-designed weapons such as SAMs, grenades and land mines. Smaller calibre, repetitive but not automatic, and short range weapons, while lethal in and of themselves, might be considered to be more a domestic criminal matter. This does not mean that they are not a threat to stability or life, but that domestic criminal laws and regulations can control their possession and use effectively in concert with the prevailing culture or security condition in the nation. Exactly what these regulations are within the nation is largely a domestic matter.

For the purposes of this report, the new Canadian regulations concerning civilian possession of firearms may be considered as a guideline for determining the lower threshold of weapons that might be included in the register, in the absence of any clear delineation internationally. Firearms are divided into a number of categories, including restricted and prohibited, based mainly on their capability to fire automatically and to be concealed easily. Strict controls are imposed on each category and owners must be licenced and meet stringent safety regulations. This categorization provides for the legitimate use of firearms where needed but removes military style automatic, heavier calibre weapons from general use.¹⁴

A light weapons register, therefore, should concentrate upon those light weapons which pose the greatest threat to international or domestic peace and security. These would include automatic sub-machine guns and assault rifles, and those similar weapons which could be modified easily to fire in such a manner. Further, as suggested by the UN Panel of Experts in their report, crew served machine guns of heavier calibre and purpose-designed portable weapons such as anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles and rockets should also be covered.¹⁵

In the case of light weapons, because of the size of known inventories and the geographic dispersion of arms shipments, it is probably unrealistic to employ methodologies involving the recording of serial numbers of complete weapons or weapon parts.¹⁶ Explosives and ammunition, too, can be easily trans-shipped in unmarked containers and there is currently no reliable or