

## THE OTTAWA WORKING GROUP

### THE ILLEGAL PROLIFERATION AND MISUSE OF LIGHT WEAPONS AND SMALL ARMS

In Attendance: Chris Smith, Christophe Carle, David Meddings, Wendy Cukier, Tariq Rauf, Paddy Rawlinson, Michael Hallowes, Jen Smith

#### Background and Context

The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development invited Chris Smith to bring together a multidisciplinary group of experts on issues relating to the illegal proliferation and misuse of light weapons and small arms. The intention behind the meeting was to offer the group the opportunity to discuss innovative approaches to the problems created by and related to light weapons proliferation.

The common understanding amongst the group is that we are unequivocally supportive of the recent surge in interest by NGOs, certain foreign governments and security analysts in light weapons proliferation and the misuse of firearms. In this spirit, we are cautious of a significant and serious lacuna, namely the near non-existence of a research culture and a robust paradigm which can assist in the further developments and understanding of what is becoming a most critical security issue in the late twentieth century. Through this working group we hope to make a significant contribution to the development of a research culture which addresses a set of issues which have emerged since the end of the Cold War. This would seem to be a useful and necessary collaboration between a multidisciplinary group of academics and those groups and organisations involved in advocacy and policy formulation. At the same time however we recognise that these issues are immensely complex which means that we are very much at the start of the formulation of a research framework which we hope to be able to refine over the coming months.

We deliberately worked from a very elementary and simple agenda. Our intention was to give colleagues from different disciplines and research traditions the space to develop and articulate their own ideas on an accepted problem. Therefore, yesterday's agenda covered three aspects of the light weapons proliferation problem namely causes, effects and solutions.

#### Causes

Our discussion led us to consider two main areas, the first concerned the strength/weakness of the state which amounted to three categories; the collapsed state, states on the *at risk register* and functioning states. In addition we looked at two main drivers which exacerbated both supply and demand: socio-economic conditions, the growing culture of violence across the board. Further work should lead to the development of an interesting matrix.