Agreements such as the OAS Convention address both the weapon and ammunition component. While the Convention is very specific on the markings of firearms no such requirement has been imposed on ammunition. More specific ammunition marking is an area that might show some modest promise to assist in determining where large quantities of ammunition came from. As noted previously, while boxes and cartons have lot number identifiers, cartridges do not. Ammunition can be easily re-packed in plain boxes, cartridges cannot easily be re-marked. The main attraction in identifying cartridges would be to aid in establishing the source -- it would not necessarily prevent the ammunition from being misused. As well, such agreements would probably contribute to more closely controlling the destinations of large quantities of ammunition.

Controlling diffused and expendable commodities such as ammunition and ammunition components is even more difficult when it comes to movement between and through states at a time of increased free trade and large container movement of goods. The "Model Regulations" that support the OAS Convention aids in keeping tabs on legal ammunition movements. Illicit ammunition and components can be broken down into small quantities for shipping and its periodic discovery will not necessarily cause significant financial problems to smuggling organizations. Enhanced intelligence and more rigorous inspections by all countries are required. Chemical detectors are expensive and slow in terms of monitoring large transit areas such as ports. This may change as the science improves. In the meantime other technologies such as X-ray devices should be considered. Again, any international agreement must ensure that adequate enforcement resources are applied to the problem. Such resource application may not be high on the priority list of many developing countries.

In the final analysis, if ammunition control within the context of limiting excessive and impact of destabilizing accumulations and transfers of small arms is pursued, it should focus on the large state producers and users of such ammunition. It is unlikely that Central African rebels, Southern African bandits, and South Asian guerrillas depend on a primary supply of ammunition from backyard ammunition factories, small commercial dealers or international criminal networks. If that were the case, ammunition usage rates would have to be severely controlled which in and of itself could serve to reduce casualties. While illicit trafficking within the context of criminal activities must be addressed, it is not the primary cause of casualties within the context of conflict and post-conflict situations. The fact remains that most of these casualties are caused by "legally" made and exported ammunition as seen in central Africa.

Future Study

The role that ammunition controls might play in providing a practical and productive solution to the misuse of small arms designed primarily for military use requires much more study. In particular such study must involve all agencies, organizations and companies in the sphere of producing and regulating ammunition. This would include political, legal, police, military, customs, shipping and port authorities, ammunition and ammunition component regulators, producers and distributors. Without this involvement, much time and money may be wasted