

For socio-economic and security reasons, a person also needs arms to protect his livelihood, farm and farm animals, particularly the carabao.

Ironically, in the interviews and informal discussions conducted in Mindanao, no one cited the need for self-defense, unlike in Metro Manila, where gun owners possess guns for self-defense due to the "present peace and order situation which is not one of the best."⁷⁶ Some view this ownership of gun as a Filipino trait, especially those in Cavite and Mindanao who are known for "their fascination for guns."⁷⁷

The proliferation of firearms in Mindanao can further be attributed to the relatively easy access and affordability of "paltik" [locally made firearms]. Firearms also change hands, something which is reflected in their relative cost, which increases as it is handed from one seller to a buyer to another buyer.⁷⁸ Prices vary according to the origins and urgency of the disposal: a 9 mm would cost around P25,000, a cal. 45 around P24,000, and an M 16 at P26,000.⁷⁹ Firearms acquired by Christians are not sold to Muslims and vice versa, given the reported feelings of mistrust between Muslims and Christians.

The prevalence of gunrunning/smuggling of firearms has been attributed to the country's geographic configuration; the prospects for huge profits; the increased connivance between gunrunning syndicates and corrupt law enforcers; and the persistent involvement of political and influential families in these activities in order to beef up their private armies.⁸⁰

One more factor that propels the arms trade is the existence of family/clan disputes among the "rich" sectors in Mindanao. These disputes are typically violent in nature; hence, families continually purchase arms to update their arsenal. In this light, gun smuggling operations whether for profit or personal use also increases.

Finally, another important factor is the socio-religious dimension for Muslims who had "equated the right to carry arms with their religious heritage".⁸¹ A Qu'ranic verse encourage the use of weapons as a preparation against oppression, and have been used to justify the possession of

⁷⁶ Poch de Castro, President, Peaceful, Responsible Owners of Guns (PROGUN) as cited in "Pinoys say no to gun" *Philippine Star*, 22 March 1999.

⁷⁷ Francisco Calado, Official of the Philippine Practical Shooting Association (PPSA) in *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Interview with an MNLF Integree to the PNP, Police Officer 1, Special Mobile Group, Camp SK Pendatun, Parang, Maguindanao, 27 October 1999.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ PCTC paper, p. 15.

⁸¹ T. J. S. George, p. 191.