

responsibility for this could rest with some agency within the government, called here the "national authority", which acts as the point of contact and the official voice for the participating nation. It is not the place of the register to interfere with the internal mechanisms of a member country. The participating state will risk international embarrassment if the data submitted is grossly incorrect and so it behooves the state to establish an accurate data gathering process within its boundaries. Naturally, the national authority will take cognizance of the requirement to submit gross statistics while protecting police intelligence, data specific to security operations, and business confidentiality.

Some countries may not have a methodology or capacity by which they can capture all the desirable information from within their national borders. In this regard, the comments of Bradford University researchers in the UK concerning the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms may be germane. They point out that one of the results of an arms register is that countries are encouraged to institute domestic controls and to take a more proactive stance in enforcement when the spotlight of public scrutiny is turned upon them. The institution and enforcement of national regulations concerning import and export controls, production licences and possession certificates is desirable, probably vital, to curb arms flows around the world or in a particular region.⁴² A light weapons register, by increasing transparency of the situation, can assist in this process.

Data Exchange

The present United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has no provision for any periodic meeting to exchange or discuss information. Participants in the UN Register of Conventional Arms simply submit hard copy data via diplomatic channels but little attempt is made to validate the data. The Vienna Document, the CFE Treaty and the OSCE Global Exchange of Military Information (GEMI) each have annual meetings to establish new base line data in hard copy format. The CFE Treaty began with declarations of equipment to establish baseline holdings and has tracked the disposition of weapons and weapons systems by means of periodic declarations substantiated by on-site monitoring. Most of these agreements have conducted annual gatherings of experts to collect and transpose data into electronic formats.

For a light weapons register, data might be exchanged at periodic physical meetings of all participants, through the submission of hard copy data by normal diplomatic channels, and/or via an electronic exchange of data using a mutually-agreed software format with electronic communication links to a central agency.

The use of such an electronic network would be cheaper than having nations send representatives to a central location to exchange information, or perhaps even the submission of hard copies via diplomatic channels. An electronic exchange could provide more timely entry of data, depending upon the frequency of changes allowed or required by agreement. To further keep costs down, the whole system could be operated on public communications systems with