

which is then projected into an area occupied by enemy troops. This weapon is not covered under the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. It should be included in the light weapons register.

On the subject of actual light weapon ammunition, suggestions have been made that there may be scope to have controls imposed on the actual rounds or bullets which are fired by light weapons. The argument is, in its simplest form, that ammunition is the necessary element without which light weapons lose their effectiveness. If one curbs the ammunition supply, therefore, the lifeblood for light weapons will be constricted and this will contribute to a diminution of light weapon use.²¹ Whether or not this hypothesis is true, the problem is that the production of and market for ammunition is huge and adds another, almost inestimable dimension to the problems associated with a light weapons register, especially the aspect of accurate data collection.

One major argument for including some data about ammunition in a light weapons register is the fact that so little is known about its manufacture and transfer among nations. A recent BASIC paper found that it "...proved quite difficult to find major sources and trade routes of ammunition supply...".²² Various estimates place the number of countries capable of producing ammunition for light weapons at between 70 and 100 plus.²³ Further, research indicates that ammunition, particularly smaller calibre rounds, can be manufactured in small facilities and that there is some capability in most countries of private entrepreneurs engaging in the production process on a small scale.²⁴ Control of component parts of ammunition (cartridge case, bullet, propellant or powder and primer) is possible but difficult because of the small size and wide availability of all but the primers. Clearly, this is an area in which greater transparency is required and which might be usefully addressed by a register. For the purposes of a register, clearly identifiable and completely manufactured ammunition may be all that can be realistically expected to be reported.

Even here there will be difficulties. Ease of transport, difficulty of detection, theft and other diversion of ammunition, lack of national controls and reticence of commercial suppliers to divulge what they see as confidential business information will be stumbling blocks to coming to grips with transparency in this area.²⁵ Notwithstanding, ammunition should not be ignored given the important place it may occupy in any proposed light weapon control mechanism.

Marking of cartridges and bullets, prohibition of certain classes of ammunition for civil use and improved domestic controls may hold some promise for the future where they are implemented.²⁶ The recent Organization of American States initiative contained in their 1997 Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of, and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials addresses ammunition as well as the weapons themselves. As is the case with the OAS agreement, a light weapons register is seen by some as a methodology to increase transparency in the area of ammunition transfers worldwide.²⁷ As noted by one writer, "...anything less than a 'holistic' approach..." to the problem of light weapons may be ineffective.²⁸