

**LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER:  
THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF THE ASSAULT RIFLE  
ON CHILDREN IN DEADLY CONFLICT**

**By**

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What's happening around the world is that innocent people are being victimized. They're the ones who are being killed, humiliated, violated, and therefore we have to provide a new generation of international laws and practices to protect individuals.... it's the vulnerable that pay the price. There's a huge arms trade going around the world. Much of it ends up in the wrong hands; it ends up with the -- you know, drug traders, the terrorists, the paramilitary groups, and they're the ones who then use it to kill the civilians.

One of the ideas that we're now looking at is how we could establish an international convention to control the transfer of weapons to non-state activists -- to the terrorist groups, to the paramilitary groups. I think the data shows that that is oftentimes the major source of arms proliferation, small arms proliferation, and therefore if we can get governments committed to taking action to limit the transfer to these new actors, these ones who've caused the conflict, I think we'll take a major step forward.

Lloyd Axworthy, Former Canadian Foreign Minister  
(Centre for Defence Information, May 2001)

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## **ABSTRACT**

**This thesis challenges the assertion that disarmament is an all or nothing issue, and instead suggests the possibility of a gradual form of micro-disarmament, based on a multi-layered systems approach which begins with the raising of public awareness. This thesis argues that such awareness can best be created by researching and presenting data on the connections between the global proliferation of small arms, specifically, the assault rifle, and its effects on the involvement of children in deadly conflict.**

**This thesis begins with a brief survey of existing research on disarmament and the small arms trade, supplemented with interviews with small arms experts, and goes on to examine international laws, norms, and statistics around arms manufacture, export, and import. It offers an overview of the UN's initiatives on disarmament and micro-disarmament, and focuses on the background to, and the outcome of, the 2001 UN Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms. It examines the various barriers to the concept and implementation of disarmament on a global scale, including the complex economics of the arms trade and thorny political issues such as definitions of state sovereignty versus human security.**

**It provides a history of the assault rifle, explains the unique characteristics of this weapon that make it particularly susceptible to use by non-state actors, and children, and summarises current data on child soldiers. Drawing on the examples of multi-track diplomacy, interdiction models used in the war on drugs, and the circumstances of the recent landmines treaty, this thesis argues that the appalling image of children armed with assault rifles, backed up with continuing research into the growing phenomenon of child soldiers, can in fact be used to combat the phenomenon itself. Finally this thesis offers a series of recommendations for further research and possible action.**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this project, sponsored by the Centre for Global Studies, is to provide a summary examination of the role and impact of the assault rifle, and, specifically, its use by children in deadly conflict. The project involved a cross-section of academic research and information obtained from small arms experts in Canada, the United States, Europe, and Africa. This project was conducted during the months of December 2000 to June 2001. The basic question under review is:

Does the assault rifle have a specific role and use with children in deadly conflict, and, if so, are its impact and role worth exploring for the purposes of strengthening the United Nations Initiative for micro-disarmament?

The paper is intended to form a summary of suggestions and policy to the United Nations with respect to the issue of small arms propagation and the foundation of recommendations for the future of micro-disarmament.

In addition to the research and information gathered from small arms experts, this project builds on, and draws from, the work that came before it, and acknowledges the research and body of information amassed by experts in the field. In particular this project utilized the Report on the Small Arms Crisis (2000) commissioned by the United Nations to evaluate the effectiveness of disarmament programs, and the recently completed Small Arms Survey (2001) which gathered, organized, and analysed, information on the small arms trade. The Small Arms Survey is the most current, and may well be the most comprehensive in terms of providing data on small arms production, trade, transfer, and availability. Information on the progress of United Nations Initiatives for micro-disarmament was also examined for this project, as the events of the United Nations

Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons In All Its Aspects unfolded in July 2001, at UN headquarters in New York.

Areas addressed in the interviews and in this report include: the disarmament movement, the barriers to disarmament, legal issues, the monitoring of weapons and the illicit trade in arms, the motive behind the use of the assault rifle by children in deadly conflict, and finally, a summary of recommendations to date and a proposed system for achieving the goals of the United Nations initiative for micro-disarmament.

It has become clear that the dangers posed by light weapons are far too serious to ignore, and many individual governments and institutions have sprung into action with initiatives to stem light weapons transfers at both the regional and international levels; however while the humanitarian and security challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms have drawn international attention, little action has resulted. For instance, it is unlikely that a ban will be entertained, as happened with the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

There is no simple answer to the problem of small arms.

Yet conflict in its deadliest form is embodied in the small arms problem. The UN has finally acknowledged the magnitude of this issue and is currently holding a conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. This thesis was timely as there existed an opportunity to move this initiative forward if data could be gathered and presented which focused on the use of the assault rifle by children in deadly conflict.

Global conflicts involving deadly force are the direct result of the proliferation and employment of small arms. Controversies regarding the need for and effectiveness of micro-disarmament might be laid to rest once and for all by research into the role and impact of the assault rifle and its use by children in deadly conflict.

Disarmament is usually understood to be absolute, i.e. no arms left. Conversely, arms control sets limits but does not eliminate all weapons. Arms control is usually but not always aimed at state actors. With small arms, one is looking for a way to control non-state actors. Because the small arms issues focuses on non-state actors and because the problem is not one of controlling weapons for inter-state conflict, this paper adopts a different approach than traditional arms control. This paper focuses on ways to get the issue on the agenda, and to generate public demand for action.

To some, disarmament “seems an all or nothing project, and most unlikely” (Dr. R. Bedeski, personal communication). I do not believe that the outright elimination of all arms is either likely or even necessary; however, it seems defeatist to assume that the scale of the problem defies solution of any kind. A starting point is required, a beginning that stands a chance of success, and may then lead to wider and more dramatic measures. I believe that starting point is examining the phenomenon of assault rifles in the hands of children. I believe that starting point can be reached by utilizing a multi-layered systems approach – from grass roots to top-level government. The need for, and power of, education, the impact and use of the media, the deployment of public opinion, and other sectors of society, in the service of fundamental change, cannot be underestimated. We need to raise awareness, to challenge resignation as well as ignorance, and this can be done in a number of ways.

While it is beyond the scope of this project to undertake to solve the global problem of small arms, or to provide definitive answers to the problem, it can begin to gather and present research that focuses on the use of one of the deadliest of the small arms - the assault rifle - in the hopes of furthering the cause of micro-disarmament.

## **Approach**

The following steps were taken in developing the perspective of this paper and its proposed recommendations for thrusting the micro-disarmament issue forward.

- ◆ A comprehensive search of the literature and research undertaken in the area of micro-disarmament and small arms proliferation, including a comparative review of the perspective and recommendations of major NGOs, academics, and research organizations from around the world.
- ◆ Meetings with the RCMP and small arms researchers and academics in the field to obtain their views on the important and emerging issues surrounding small arms.
- ◆ Identification and analysis of the issues associated with the continuation of small arms production, trade, and stockpiling, and their implications for human security and the development of questions/interview criteria in order to disaggregate existing data.
- ◆ Examination of the role of the assault rifle in deadly conflict, its specific use by children, and its proposed use in addressing the small arms issue.
- ◆ Based on the above information, the development of a proposal for a systematic approach to the small arms issue.

## **Description of Project**

A large body of research exists on disarmament and arms. The majority of this research has focused on identifying the global factors that contribute to the small arms problem, and making recommendations for what can be done to combat it. Furthermore this existing data does not distinguish between different types of arms, but includes all light weapons and small arms. While there is widespread recognition that assault rifles cause the majority of harm in intra-state conflict there is little research that investigates its specific use in deadly conflict, or explores the number and availability of these weapons globally.

Research regarding the role and impact of the assault rifle and its use by children in deadly conflict was also lacking. Yet this data alone might promote public mobilization, ensuring that the problem of small arms was widely recognised, and the issue of micro-disarmament put forward with greater urgency. From there, recommendations specific to the most deadly of the weapons in this category could be developed and measures implemented to begin to solve the identified problems.

The image of a small child with an assault rifle on his shoulder and a necklace of ammunition immediately and irresistibly draws attention to the small arms problem, and makes a compelling argument for micro-disarmament; however the image requires the backup of currently unavailable facts. What is the role and impact of the assault rifle and what is its use in deadly conflict? Currently, of the combatants in global conflict, how many are children using assault rifles? How many child combatants are currently being trained to use assault rifles? Are child combatants being killed with assault rifles? How

many? What measures, if any, can be taken to prevent this? This project undertook to provide these answers.

## **Sources of Information and Research Methodology**

A copy of the project prospectus including the purpose, objectives and overview of this project (Appendix A) as well as an introduction to the project, (Appendix C), and a set of interview questions (Appendix B) are attached to this report. Literature reviewed for this project was taken primarily from library resources, electronic searches of academic and non-governmental organizations' publications and research, and personal communication and interviews with experts in the field of small arms. This project concentrated on the expertise developed by individuals who study the small arms trade, as well as their research and academic literature in this field.

Since no research specific to the assault rifle or the use of the assault rifle by children in deadly conflict was readily available, experts in the field of small arms were contacted and consulted directly. Data collection involved the completion of an interview/questionnaire form by small arms experts. Over 24 small arms experts from 5 countries were contacted to ensure the broadest possible representation, given the size of the field itself. Experts were selected from a variety of non-governmental organizations, research institutes, universities and private sources that researched and studied small arms and child combatants. Although these organisations have a variety of mandates, work on various issues, and represent different constituencies, they are all working to facilitate individual and collective action aimed at combating the grave threat they see posed by the proliferation and misuse of small arms.

Each interview was guided by the questionnaire with seven open-ended questions (see Appendix B). Development of the questions was guided in part by the Centre for Global Studies Director, Gordon Smith. Interviews were completed by electronic mail, because of the limited availability of time and resources as well as the geographic distances involved.

The questions were designed specifically to attempt to disaggregate the existing data and focus on information specific to the assault rifle, its availability worldwide, and its role for and use by children in deadly conflict. As well, the questions were designed to elicit the opinion of small arms experts with regard to the potential usefulness of focussing on the assault rifle and children as a means of mobilizing public opinion and propelling forward the small arms issue.

Direct research was also completed with the assistance of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Firearms Division, using assault rifles recovered from the Third World in order to determine the approximate amount of strength, training, and expertise required to operate assault rifles and gain a better, more intimate understanding of the weapon's capability and its use in deadly conflict.

## **Results from the Interviews**

In all of the interviews conducted, experts admitted that the data specific to the assault rifle and its use by children in deadly conflict was not known. Indeed, the interviews themselves suggested the need to broaden the scope of the research to include an examination of current global statistics specific to the assault rifle.

While one expert suggested that inferences could be drawn from the apparent connection of arms availability to clusters of child soldiers, many other experts felt that this would be

guessing at best. While there are global estimates of numbers of child combatants, at this time, no data exists with regard to numbers of child combatants aged 13-17, or under 12. Likewise, while the research exists regarding small arms in general, the data specific to assault rifles is only just becoming available. More research is needed in order to determine numbers of child combatants using assault rifles, numbers of children being recruited and trained to use them, and numbers of children being killed with them. Concurrent to the completion of this project, research was being done by the Small Arms Survey regarding small arms stockpiles, production, trade, both legal and illegal, and examining the effects of small arms availability. This research, in conjunction with research regarding child soldiers, their treatment, recruitment and rehabilitation became the backbone of this work with a particular focus on the role and impact of the AK-47 in both global small arms stockpiles, and its use by children. Much of the information with regard to the assault rifle specifically came from personal communication and consultations with small arms experts and personal research with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Firearms Division.

## **Organization of Paper**

The paper is divided into six parts:

- ◆ This introductory section;
- ◆ A background section providing definitions, an outline of the rules with regard to small arms, past and current UN initiatives to address disarmament and micro-disarmament, the barriers to achieving these, and an overview of the small arms issue;



- ◆ A section discussing the small arms trade, the monitoring and use of trade as a warning system for conflict, examining the commerce of arms, existing levels of trade and the roles of brokers and agents within them;
- ◆ A section discussing child soldiers, and their inter-relatedness with the small arms issue;
- ◆ A section outlining the history of and statistics on the assault rifle, the cause and effect relationship between the assault rifle and current types of conflict, and the assault rifle's specific role and use in deadly conflict;
- ◆ A section outlining findings and recommendations so far, including suggestions based on the research for this paper, recommendations of NGOs to date, and the analysis of the issues and implications for a systematic approach for the United Nations.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The proliferation of small arms, and munitions and explosives has also aggravated the violence associated with terrorism and organized crime. Even in societies not beset by civil war, the easy availability of small arms has in many cases contributed to violence and political instability. These, in turn, have damaged development prospects and imperiled human security in every way. There is probably no single tool of conflict so widespread, so easily available, and so difficult to restrict as small arms.

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General (Batchelor, Karp, Haug, Berlinck,  
Demetriou, Muggah and McDonald, 2001, p.197)

### **1.1 Definitions**

#### **Disarmament**

While there is no universally agreed-upon precise definition of “disarmament,” or even wide acceptance of the term, “disarmament” is generally known as the reduction by a state of its military forces and weapons. Disarmament is also known as a process involving progressive reductions of existing stocks of nuclear weapons, leading ultimately to the total elimination of all such weapons.

#### **Micro-disarmament**

For the purpose of this thesis the term “micro-disarmament” refers not only to the weapons type (small or light) but also to the level at which the disarmament occurs – in this case at the individual and community level. It includes such activities as disarming combatants and civilians through voluntary or incentive-based weapons exchanges in post-conflict environments.

Micro-disarmament extends beyond traditional military disarmament by integrating approaches to security, public health, education, crime prevention, and community peace-building.

### **Child**

For the purposes of this thesis the term “child” is in keeping with the UN definition of “child” from the UN convention of the Rights of a Child, i.e.: “every human being below the age of 18 years, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (United Nations, June 2001).

### **Child Soldier**

For the purposes of this thesis a child soldier is any child under the age of 18, recruited, conscripted, trained or used, voluntarily or non-voluntarily, in army (legitimate or illegitimate) insurgent groups, to commit acts of violence or contribute to acts of violence in conflict.

### **Small Arms / Light Weapons**

According to the definitions drafted by the UN Panel of Experts on Small Arms and approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1997, the following weapons are included in the categories of small arms and light weapons:

#### **Small arms:**

- Revolvers and self-loading pistols
- Rifles and carbines
- Sub-machine guns
- Assault rifles
- Light machine guns

**Light weapons:**

- Heavy machine-guns
- Hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers
- Portable anti-aircraft guns
- Portable anti-tank guns and recoilless rifles
- Portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems
- Portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems
- Mortars of calibres of less than 100 mm

While there is no legally accepted definition of small arms or light weapons, for the purposes of this thesis the term “small arms/light weapons” may be used interchangeably and will reflect the United Nations definition as “any weapon that can be fired, maintained, and transported by one person” (United Nations, June 2001).

**Assault Weapon vs. Assault Rifle**

Within this thesis the terms “assault rifle” and “assault weapon” are not interchangeable.

Assault rifles are machine guns. Assault rifles are called “automatic” weapons because the loading and firing of a fresh cartridge is automatic as long as ammunition remains and the trigger is depressed. Such weapons have been common since World War II. Though sometimes cosmetically similar, “assault weapons” are not machine guns. Assault weapons encompass an amorphous group of guns that can only fire a single shot with each squeeze of the trigger.

**Arms Broker**

For the purpose of this thesis the term “arms broker” is used in accordance with its definition in the Small Arms Survey (2001): “an individual who facilitates and organizes

arms transactions on behalf of suppliers and recipients for some form of compensation or financial reward” (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.5).

## **1.2 The UN Initiative and Its Mission**

The destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons in regions of conflict is a serious threat to human security; thus sustainable disarmament is a primary initiative for the United Nations disarmament department. The vision of the United Nations disarmament department includes the following statement:

### **Disarmament**

Global norms for disarmament are vital to the sustainable development, quality of life, and ultimately the survival of this planet. The need for such norms arises directly from the legacy of the last century of wars and preparations for wars.

The costs of such conflicts have been extraordinary and have included the loss of untold millions of innocent civilians...

(United Nations, June 2001).

The department of disarmament affairs within the United Nations believes that the elimination of burgeoning stockpiles of weapons, and of the illicit trafficking of them, will reduce the effects of war, eradicate the potential for new conflicts, and free up resources to improve lives. The United Nations believes the challenges of disarmament can be overcome with deliberate human action, strong governmental support, and public awareness. The United Nations disarmament initiatives will advance the goals of world peace and development.

## **Micro-disarmament**

Accumulations of small arms and light weapons by themselves do not cause the conflicts in which they are used. Their availability, however, contributes towards intensifying conflicts by increasing the lethality and duration of violence, by encouraging a violent rather than a peaceful resolution of differences, and by generating a vicious circle of greater insecurity, which in turn leads to a greater demand for and use of these weapons.

The micro-disarmament initiative arose in order to identify possible global measures to combat the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms without threatening the legitimate right of states to use them. This is one of the reasons the General Assembly decided in December 1999 to convene the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms in July 2001.

The UN decided to spearhead this initiative because virtually every part of the UN system was dealing with the direct and indirect consequences of recent armed conflicts fought mostly with these weapons. Small arms and light weapons are increasingly used as primary instruments of violence in the internal conflicts dealt with by the UN; they are responsible for large numbers of civilian as well as military deaths and the displacement of citizens around the world, and they consume vast amounts of UN resources.

Since the mid-1990s the United Nations has placed the issue of small arms and light weapons firmly on the international political agenda, promoting awareness of the problems posed by these weapons. The UN has established a number of

expert groups – notably the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms - to study the nature and causes of the accumulations and transfers of small arms and light weapons, and to recommend ways and means to prevent and reduce them.

The Group of Experts recommended that:

The primary focus of attention should be on small arms and light weapons that are manufactured to military specifications. Other types of firearms used in conflicts may, however, also have to be considered in dealing with the problems in the most affected regions of the world. (United Nations, June 2001).

The UN has dealt with small arms in the context of other issues such as the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts, children and armed conflict, and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants into peacekeeping.

The proliferation of small arms is a global phenomenon and thus a source of grave concern for the United Nations.

## **The 2001 UN Conference**

In the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, it was recommended that the objective of the Conference should be to develop and strengthen international efforts to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. To this end, the Group recommended that the aims of the conference should be:

- To strengthen or develop norms regarding trade in small arms at the global, regional, and national levels to prevent and combat the illicit trade,
- To develop agreed international measures to prevent and combat illicit arms trafficking in and manufacturing of small arms and light weapons, and to reduce excessive and destabilizing accumulations and transfers of such weapons throughout the world,
- To mobilize the political will throughout the international community to prevent and combat illicit transfers in and manufacturing of small arms and light weapons,
- To raise awareness of the character and seriousness of the interrelated problems associated with the illicit trafficking in and manufacture of small arms and light weapons,
- To promote responsibility by states with regard to the export, import, transit, and retransfer of small arms and light weapons.

## **The “Vienna Process”**

While the 2001 UN Conference is dealing with the destabilizing accumulation and spread of military-style small arms and light weapons within the context of disarmament and arms control, another, concurrent process dealing with small arms and light weapons is taking place in Vienna.



Delegations in Vienna are negotiating a legally binding draft Protocol, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Once concluded, the draft Protocol will provide an international law enforcement mechanism for crime prevention and the prosecution of traffickers. The Protocol may include articles establishing internationally recognized standards and provisions regarding marking, registration, and traceability of firearms.

### **1.3 Introduction to the Issue of Small Arms**

Small arms and light weapons are for the most part, legal. Most are manufactured legally, and most adults in most countries have the right to own and use a variety of firearms in a variety of circumstances. Furthermore, this reality is not about to change. Small arms will not be banned, nor will we see a global movement to try and ban them.

Yet small arms and light weapons are a pre-eminent threat to human security.

A comparison is sometimes drawn between arms and drugs (Bedeski, Andersen and Darmosumarto, 2000). It is claimed that both arms and drugs can have legitimate functions for the good of society when controlled and used for positive ends. Arms may be legitimate used for military and police purposes; similarly drugs are legitimate when used for medical purposes. There are further links between the drug trade and the small arms trade. Research reveals that small arms trade routes often involve the same trafficking routes and criminal organizations as the drug trade, and drugs and small arms have similar characteristics, such as widespread demand, relative difficulty of detection and ease of transport, distribution, trade and manufacture requiring illicit networks, and so on.

The comparison extends to the use of the drug interdiction model as a mechanism for arms control. According to Bedeski et al. (2000), lessons to be learned from the drug interdiction model include: the reduction of supply and demand for the product, prohibition of transportation, improved ability and technology for detection, crackdown on police and government corruption, and improved enforcement capability and international co-operation. In his working paper on Small Arms Trade, Bedeski et al. also point out that drugs and small arms have major differences. He states that

While trade in the latter is legitimate, as long as there is government sanction, the illicit drug trade is practically proscribed universally. Also, illicit drugs have accelerated the spread of diseases such as hepatitis and HIV, affecting individuals far beyond users. The indirect effect of small weapons is much more limited.

(Bedeski et al., 2000, p.4)

While it may be true that small arms do not have the same range of impact as drugs, nevertheless small arms remain a significant global issue affecting millions of lives each year.

The majority of conflicts today, particularly internal conflicts, are fought with light weapons and small arms. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, of all of the wars being fought at the beginning of 1995, light weapons and small arms were the main equipment used in all of them, and in the majority of them, the only equipment. Small arms are the weapons of choice for combatants for a number of reasons: they are cheap, durable, with few moving parts and little need for spares. Furthermore these weapons can be assembled, transported and used by anyone, even children.

According to the Small Arms Survey (2001), while small arms comprised only 5% of the total value of legal arms exports, these weapons accounted for up to 90% of the casualties, most of these were civilians. Small arms and light weapons have unique characteristics that make them a significant threat to civilians and therefore a particular concern for organizations that assist in development or humanitarian relief (Bonn International Center for Conversion, May 2001).

First of all, small arms and light weapons are portable and easily concealed; they allow for highly mobile operations. An individual can carry small arms for personal use, while light weapons can be handled and transported by two or more people serving as a crew, using a pack animal or a light vehicle. In other words, they are easy to smuggle.

Second, they are cheap and easily available in comparison to other conventional arms. Their relative low cost means they are too easily underestimated. Since small arms represent a small percentage of conventional arms production and trade, globally the damage and effectiveness of small arms is taken too lightly. Their inexpensiveness also makes them affordable to many non-state actors, and they are therefore the preferred equipment of armed forces and insurgent groups in poor countries (Renner, 1997).

According to the Small Arms Survey (2001), although small arms represent only 5% of the total value of global arms exports, more than 80% of conflicts are fought with them.

Third, they are lethal. Small arms have high firepower, which allows small groups using these weapons to cause heavy casualties among the civilian population. Many of these weapons allow for fire of up to 700 rounds per minute. As assault rifles become more

and more sophisticated, groups are able to meet or exceed the firepower of military or police forces (Klare and Boutwell, 1999).

Fourth, small arms are lightweight, durable, and simple to use and operate. Since small arms require little, if any, maintenance, they can essentially last forever. Nor do they require any complex logistical knowledge, so that even young children can use them with minimal training (Smith and Bradley, 2000).

The vast number and global distribution of small arms constitute an urgent and immense threat to human and state security worldwide. This class of weapon, relatively inexpensive, easy to smuggle, exceptionally durable, and easily transported, now fuels armed conflict in over 42 countries. Smith and Bradley state:

the uncontrolled trade in small arms has dramatically increased the availability of assault rifles, machine guns, and grenade launchers in regions where violence is pervasive. Generally, in regions afflicted by poverty and corruption, this accumulation of weapons has transformed group tensions into deadly conflict, children into soldiers, and communities into war zones. These weapons have claimed the lives of millions of innocent civilians in the last decade alone.

(Smith and Bradley, 2000, p.1)

The class of small arms and light weapons has been defined in various ways, but is usually understood to include weapons designed to military specifications for use either by an individual or a small group as lethal instruments of combat. It is generally accepted that “small arms and light weapons” include revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles, assault rifles, machineguns, grenade launchers, small calibre mortars, and shoulder-fired anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles.

The problems caused by the widespread proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons are no longer in doubt. While light weapons and small arms are not the root cause of violence, they are responsible for making crime more violent and conflict more lethal. Easy access to light weapons and small arms, by legitimate purchase or via the black market, exacerbates violations of human rights, thwarts long term sustainable development and reconstruction, and prevents the peaceful resolution of conflict.

The total number of small arms in the world today, according to the Small Arms Survey (2001) is 550 million, which is one gun for every 11 people, including children. Small arms are the “real weapons of mass destruction” taking more than one thousand lives a day and over half a million a year (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.1). The Small Arms Survey also reports that every year, an average of 300,000 intentional firearms deaths occur as a result of armed conflict, and another 200,000 occur in countries known as “peaceful”. In addition to fatalities, millions more are injured.

The Small Arms Survey (2001) states that firearms injuries are already the leading cause of death for adult Afro-Americans, and it is predicted that by the year 2003 the number of fatalities from firearms will surpass the number of automobile accidents for the entire population.

Some regions of the world have created their own treaties or agreements on controlling small arms. The Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of African Unity all have agreements, though these have not stopped the flow of arms into guerrilla wars. The United Nations conference in New York was the first attempt to reach a global agreement.

## **1.4 What Are the Rules?**

### **International Standards and Regional Approaches**

There are no agreed international norms and standards dealing directly with small arms and light weapons. At the same time, many of the more than 100 states that do not export these weapons nevertheless rely on them for their legitimate national and collective defence and internal security needs. States uphold the right of individual and collective self-defence, as recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and the legitimate security demands of all countries. It is also generally recognized that small arms are traded globally for legitimate security and commercial considerations.

#### **EU Code of Conduct**

In May 1998, European Union Foreign Ministers agreed to a European Union Code of Conduct for arms exports. However many believe that it failed to meet its objective of setting truly “high common standards”. On four contentious issues, the weaker option was chosen: weak human rights criteria, no multilateral consultations before undercutting, no public annual reports on arms exports or on the Code’s implementation, and no legally binding status for the rules. Furthermore the Code does not provide for public transparency or parliamentary scrutiny, mechanisms to regulate brokering, control of licensed production, or a common system of end-use controls. According to many experts, Codes of Conduct should be stronger than the one adopted by the EU, but it is, at least, a beginning (Smith and Bradley, 2000).

## **OAS Convention**

Regional groupings have worked towards greater transparency. In November 1997, members of the Organization of American States (OAS) signed a convention against the illicit manufacture, traffic, sale, and transfer of firearms, ammunition, explosives, and other materials, which provided for the creation of a “register of manufacturers, traders, importers and exporters” of these products. As yet, however, no states have made any information available to indicate the effectiveness of the OAS convention. The OAS convention only came into force in July 1998, and some experts would argue that it is still too early to expect any useful data (Smith and Bradley, 2000).

## **ECOWAS Moratorium**

In October of 1998, the heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) created the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation, and Manufacture of Light Weapons in the ECOWAS Region, which was not legally binding. It sought to make arms flows transparent at the regional level, but has been undermined by limited resources and challenged by the complexity of its task. Progress has been made towards establishing a database and regional arms register, but these are not yet operational. An evaluation of the experience of the first year since the implementation of the Moratorium indicates that eight requests for arms imports were made. Requests ranged from arms dealers seeking to import without penalty, to citizens asking to import hunting rifles. These eight requests obviously do not reflect the overall picture of arms transactions in the region. Continued conflict and several plausible reports suggest that some ECOWAS member states are engaging in weapons importation, and this has further hindered success (Smith and Bradley, 2000).

## 1.5 Barriers to Disarmament

As Smith and Bradley (2000) state: “the universally exercised right to maintain adequate defence forces for the purpose of state security renders a global agreement on the complete ban of small arms impossible; even an agreement on ‘control’ is difficult”

(p.6). The direct approach that was taken to ban anti-personnel landmines will not work with small arms. One of the major challenges facing the world is the sheer volume of weapons, estimated at 500 million, flowing through legal, illegal and covert channels. Other challenges with regard to small arms proliferation include the amount of secrecy involved in arms trading, the lack of consistency with regard to regulations for arms transfers, and lack of data due to all of these factors.

It was generally agreed upon that the post-Cold War era had an extensive small arms surplus (Bonn International Center for Conversion, May 2001). States with existing caches of weapons and the ability to produce more have been reluctant to destroy their over-supply; they exported it instead, especially to conflict zones where demand is persistent. Of course such a trade makes deadly conflict more likely, and more lethal. Few governments publish statistics on the sale or transfer of small arms, or release information about the sales activities of private companies. This must change. In the absence of reliable data from governments, the UN and member states should encourage and subsidize the development and publication of arms trade information from non-governmental sources.

For real change to occur, governments, particularly those in North America will need to go beyond their stated support for cracking down on the illegal trade in small arms and



examine their actual role in the legal trade. The reality is that 80% to 90% of small arms originates from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, and Germany. While the UN continues to attempt to secure international treaties to address the use of small arms by children in deadly conflicts, serious international barriers remain. Even now, the United States continues to express its reluctance to join treaties that restrict the use of arms by children, despite the overwhelming evidence of human rights violations and unnecessary violence caused by these weapons.

The Bush administration feels that these treaties will impinge on the fundamental right of American citizens to own guns. Speaking to the UN conference in New York on July 9 2001, John R. Bolton, under secretary of state for arms control and international security affairs, called upon the Second Amendment: "The United States believes that the responsible use of firearms is a legitimate aspect of national life... Like many countries, the United States has a cultural tradition of hunting and sport shooting."

Bolton noted that Americans do not consider all guns "problematic," adding: "The United States will not join consensus on a final document that contains measures abrogating the constitutional right to bear arms" (as cited by Barbara Crossette, New York Times, July 9, 2001).

While the United States is not the only country reluctant to enter into an international pact to control arms use, a gap is widening between Canada, Europe, and the United States over how broad an agreement is needed to combat the spread of weapons. The U.S.'s concern is that international standards will be used at the regional level and impose restrictions on domestic firearms policy; and China, India, and Russia share this view.

Not surprisingly, according to the Small Arms Survey, these same countries are major producers of arms (Batchelor et al., 2001).

## **MONITORING TRADE AND ILLICIT TRADE**

### **2.1 Weapons Monitoring and Destruction**

One of the most frustrating and tragic aspects of this issue has been the UN's inability to effectively monitor the location, collection, and destruction of arms in several post-conflict peace operations. In Mozambique, UN personnel witnessed weapons being collected, only to watch the then uncontrolled redistribution of these same weapons. Eventually these weapons contributed to the bloodshed and disorder elsewhere in Southern Africa. A weak mandate and inadequate capacity accounted for this inability to monitor weapons after they had been collected, reminding us once again how crucial adequate resources and a serious peace mandate are to achieving the UN's goals.

### **2.2 Utilizing Early Warning Signs to Prevent Conflict**

Dr Edward Laurance, Director of the Program of Security and Development at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, asserts that tracking the flow of small arms and the accumulation of weapons within a single area can be a useful indicator of brewing conflict. Laurance believes that during any peace operation, close monitoring of insecure arsenals, black markets, border crossings, frequencies of violent attacks and civilian weapons possession can all yield advance warnings of conflict.

Laurance also highlights the importance of ammunition supplies as potential early warning indicators. He believes that ammunition represent a key link between small arms demand and supply. He states that since ammunition can, for the most part, be produced in mass quantities with precision tools, they are therefore normally acquired from arms

producing states outside the conflict region. According to Smith and Bradley, M-16 ammunition for example, is not produced anywhere in South or East Asia. Simply put, controlling and monitoring supplies of ammunition can reduce the demand for small arms. Monitors at airports and other entry points can help detect bulk imports of ammunition, and effectively reduce the damage caused by these weapons.

There are other early indicators of conflict as well (Smith and Bradley, 2000). Many states are reluctant to destroy old weapons when replacements are required, and opt instead to export their surplus. Closer monitoring of these surpluses and their disposition could warn of the dangerous arrival of arms into a region. The savings achieved when deadly conflict is averted or reduced would of course cancel out the expense of monitoring, or of ensuring the destruction of surplus arms. According to the Small Arms Survey (2001) “for Latin America alone, the direct and indirect cost of violence amount to between US\$ 140-170 billion a year” (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.5).

Another indicator lies in the examination of black market prices of weapons. It has been found by local and international NGOs that black market prices of weapons can give a telling indication of the accessibility and size of stocks. In mid-2000 for example, an AK-47 could be bought for a few dollars in Southern Africa, but cost more than \$1000 in Israel and the West Bank. In Albania, the price of AK-47s fluctuated from very high at one point (\$200) to very low (\$20) when the market was saturated, only to climb again as dealers began to consolidate stocks and withhold supply.

## **2.3 The Commerce of Arms**

The commerce of small arms, like any market, is defined by the dynamics of supply and demand. The global spread of small arms has been facilitated by continued production from countries from North America, which benefit from a market worth an estimated 5 to 7 billion in annual trade (Smith and Bradley, 2000).

The global commerce in small arms and light weapons constitutes one of the great unnecessary evils of our age. It will submit to no glib slogans or easy treaty. It will defeat the attempt of any solitary organization or state to control or subdue it. But there are, to begin with, partial remedies at hand: practicable measures to suppress supply, by exposing and policing the worst of the trade; practicable measures to reduce demand, through more effective and lasting conflict prevention, peace-building, and disarmament.

### **Arms Trade**

Even though the majority of the world's small arms have legal beginnings, they can end up in the hands of criminals, insurgent groups, or other non-intended recipients. Legal transfers can contribute to instability when newly purchased weapons replace older ones, so that, in turn, older weapons are released onto the market. This further saturates an already oversupplied market, adding to stockpiles and driving the price of weapons down. While 80% to 90% of global arms transfers are legal, this leads to corruption and theft, which then feeds the black market (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.167). While illicit trade constitutes only 10% to 20% of the arms trade, it is a major factor contributing to crime, corruption, and civil conflict. (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.167)

## **Small Arms Transfers – a Continuum of Legality**

The discussion of small arms trade and transfers involves a distinctive terminology that can be confusing and difficult to decipher. Transfers occur in “legal”, “black market,” and “grey market” venues. Legal venues involve the active or passive involvement of governments, and their representatives, and in accordance with national or international law. The “grey market” usually refers to illicit transfers, which use loopholes and inconsistencies in law or policy designed to thwart them. “Black market” deals are clear violations of international/national law, and although they lack the official consent of governments, these deals sometimes involve government officials working outside of official circles for their own gain. The term “transfer” can be used to refer to both the legal and illicit spectrum, “trade” refers to business conducted by governments or with their knowledge, “covert trade”, whether legal or illicit is conducted underground, and “trafficking” always refers to illegal or black market transfers (Batchelor et al., 2001, P.166).

Secrecy persists as a major stumbling block with regard to assessing the legal small arms trade. Though many countries are currently examining initiatives to ensure greater transparency in arms transfers to date an unwillingness to release customs data on military export that are classified as a secret remains (Batchelor et al., 2001). Other examples of secrecy at work includes airline crews flying cargo without knowledge of the true nature of the cargo, and flight plans or transport documents which disguise the true identity of those involved in the transaction. Clandestine arms transport flights are also known to take roundabout routes involving multiple landings, refuellings, and/or changes of aircraft. Lack of clarity is also an issue. Currently arms export licenses give no actual

indication of value or volume – they may be granted for a single weapon, or for thousands at a time.

## **Major Producers and Suppliers**

Legal manufacturers appear to have increased in the last twenty years: in 1980, less than 200 companies existed; today that number has increased to more than 600 companies.

More than half these manufacturers are in the United States. According to the Small Arms Survey (2001), 95 countries have arms production capabilities; this number would of course be much higher if illegal producers were included. 60 of the 95 are known as “legal” small arms exporters, though fewer than 30 provide documentation of these exports for public information.

Though 95 countries have the capacity to produce arms, there are tremendous differences between them. At one end of the spectrum are countries such as Canada, Finland, Chile, Italy, South Africa, the UK, and the United States, which provide data on the quantities, and values of their exports. At the other end countries such as China, Bulgaria, Iran, and Russia provide no data at all, although these very countries are known to export significant quantities of arms.

According to the Small Arms Survey (2001), in 1999-2000 alone, Russia exported tens of millions of dollars worth of AK rifles to Africa. In August 2000 alone, Russia supplied 4,000 AKs to Indonesia.

The global small arms industry can be divided into four major categories, according to the value and volume of production. Batchelor et al. (2001) list three countries as “major” producers: China, Russia, and the United States. Indeed, one source states that there are “a quarter of a million federally licensed firearms dealers in the United States – 20 times

the number of McDonald's restaurants" (Renner, 1997, p.21). According to the Small Arms Survey (2001), the United States produces an average of 4.37 million firearms per year. From 1970-1998 they have produced nearly 127 million, and the value to the US of global arms production in 2000 alone was at least 1.4 billion dollars.

According to the Small Arms Survey (2001) the United States is home to "the world's largest arsenal of firearms, constituting almost half of all known firearms in the world" (p.66). The US currently has enough weapons to arm every single one of its 250 million residents, including children.

"Medium" ranking producers exist in another 20 or so countries, mostly in Europe and Asia. Nearly 30 countries are "small" producers, and at least 40 more have some capacity but cannot be assessed at this time. Last year the total value of global small arms production, including ammunition, was \$4 billion US (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.15).

Data on imports is even more limited. Small arms experts base their statistics on anecdotal information or estimates. For example, information is gathered from COMTRADE (UN customs database for commercial trade), within the UN Statistics Division where a number of countries report exports and imports of weapons and ammunition for publication. Using COMTRADE data the Small Arms Survey identified "the Netherlands, Turkey, the UK, Saudi Arabia and The United States" as the top five recipients of assault rifles from 1994 to 1998 (p.156). It is important to note that in some cases, the data on imports does not reflect the weapons' final destination. The Small Arms Survey also identifies top importers of small arms from the United States in 1990 – 1999, listing Israel, Germany, Kuwait, Bosnia, and Taiwan as the top five for military rifles.



According to reported customs data “between 1990 and 1998, the US exported a total of some 666,000 military rifles, 56,000 machine guns, 92,000 military shotguns and 1, 8000, 000 pistols and revolvers” (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.155). In fact, the US was cited as by far the largest exporter of small arms and ammunition, with sales and authorizations in the amount of 3.7 billion US to 154 countries for 1996-1998 (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.152).

Production is a major issue because, as Michael Renner put it, “the longer large-scale production continues, the greater the future supply of arms whose whereabouts will be of concern” (Renner, 1997, p.59).

## **Brokers/Transport Agents**

Brokers and other intermediaries play a critical role in both the legal and black market trade in small arms. The Small Arms Survey conducted an analysis of arms brokers based on case studies from different parts of the world, and found that in many cases the brokering of arms is made possible “by the complicity of public officials” and driven by interstate conflict where insurgent groups were in need of arms. Some governments use brokers to conceal their arms exports or procurement (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.3). The Small Arms Survey also found that

Arms brokers have become increasingly prominent because of the declining role of government agencies in covert arms deals and the rising demand for indirect arms transfers to questionable recipients. The growth of internal conflict has created a new demand for arms among non-state actors. In addition, the rise of

transnational organized crime has contributed to unprecedented demand for small arms, among those groups and individuals unable to turn to established suppliers.

(Batchelor et al., 2001, p.3)

Some brokers work against official policy by finding loopholes, inadequacies, or oversights in national regulations. For example, many national policies do not prohibit or regulate intermediaries, although arms brokers strive for secrecy even in the most permissive situations in order to minimize accountability. According to the Small Arms Survey “brokers play dual roles facilitating both commodities (e.g. diamonds and drugs) and weapons deals. In doing so, they link international markets to the warring parties, thus fuelling the ‘globalization of the war economy’” (Batchelor et al., 2001, p.107).

## **Black Market / Illicit Trade**

The United Nations states that 40% 60% of global arms have been acquired illegally on the black market, which exacerbates the problem of monitoring (as cited by Barbara Crossette, UN Effort to Cut Arms Traffic Meets a U.S. Rebuff, NY Times, July 9, 2001). Lightweight and easy to conceal, assault rifles are extremely attractive to smugglers, and regions of conflict provide fertile ground for illicit weapons trafficking. Weapons can be obtained illegally by bartering commodities like diamonds, or through deals that obscure or lie about the source or destination of the weapons. For former combatants, who lack access to peaceful and sustainable livelihoods, weapons can become a form of currency: in order to survive, they may use them for banditry or trade them in the civilian market for other goods. Once a conflict ends, it is often extremely difficult for authorities to regain control of the weapons that have flooded the country. Long after a conflict is over,

the exceptional longevity of the weapons themselves means that over they continue to crop up in other conflict prone areas.

Small Arms, Big Impact (1997) provides the following example of the extraordinary mobility of weapons:

...weapons left behind by the United States in Vietnam in the 1970s showed up in the Middle East and Central America, U.S armaments pumped into Central America in the 1980s are now part of a regional black market; weapons from Lebanon's civil war in the 1970s and 1980s have been shipped to Bosnia; and surplus arms from Mozambique's civil war are being smuggled by former rebel soldiers to bands of criminals in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

(Renner, 1997, p.39)

## **Drugs and Diamonds**

Profits from the trade in drugs and gems fuelled outbreaks of violence in 47 civil wars between 1960 and 1999. Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have all suffered from conflicts involving the diamond industry. According to the Small Arms Crisis Paper (2000), in Sierra Leone every year, diamonds worth tens of millions of dollars are used to buy weapons and ammunition to support control of the industry. The UN ban on diamonds from this region is a major step toward regulation of this industry, but efforts to quell the black market trade must be intensified.

## **CHILD SOLDIERS**

The tragedy and the horror of children affected by war, and the plight of child soldiers, are horrific and almost inconceivable to an adult living in a country currently unaffected by violent conflict. It is not the purpose of this paper to provide anything more than an introduction to this issue. The premise of this paper is however to illustrate the link between assault rifles and children.

Children have always been exploited and victimized in war. Today's conflicts, however, are even more likely to pressure children to become soldiers. Children lacking education and stability, who have suffered internal displacement or refugee flight, separation of families, and chronic poverty, are all too easy pickings. It is often difficult to distinguish between a forced and a voluntary child soldier. Some children join armed forces for food, survival, or to avenge atrocities in their communities; others have been physically abducted for war by such armed groups as RENAMO in Mozambique and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda (Child Soldiers, June 2001). Research also shows that the participation of children in deadly conflict is increasing. Why might this be?

Military commanders have discovered that both boys and girls are useful for reconnaissance missions because of their small size and ability to move unnoticed in many social circumstances. Child soldiers are particularly valued for their agility and fearlessness. Children may also be mobilized to take part in warfare by ideological zeal, because they seek the protection of armed adults, because they are easily manipulated, intimidated, or simply because they do not understand the lethal effects of the weapons being used around them.

While the most immediate risk to children in armed combat is death, injury and long-term trauma are also direct results. According to the Small Arms Survey (2001), children made up to 40% of all civilian casualties in Chechnya in February and May 1995. Red Cross field workers in Chechnya reported repeatedly finding the corpses of children who had been executed with a bullet to the temple. The survivors were frequently severely wounded.

The most frequent child-specific injuries are loss of hearing, sight, and limbs, all of which have permanent or at least long-term repercussions on the victim's future reintegration and value to society. Secondary effects include higher susceptibility to health hazards, such as malnutrition, psychosocial trauma and psychological disorders, skin and respiratory diseases, malaria as well as sexual exploitation among sexes, laying them open to increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI's), HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, abortion, or premature, involuntary childbirth. Other documented non-combat related injuries include beatings, deprivation of food /drink, and bone deformation from carrying heavy loads.

(as cited in Batchelor et al., 2001, p.230)

In 1998 the Colombian Armed Forces had 15,000 minors as soldiers; they have been called the "little bells" because they are used as an early warning system. The guerrillas also call them "little bees" because they manage to strike at the enemy without the latter realizing they are under attack (National Post, November 9, 2000).

The Swedish organization Rädde Barnen (Save the Children) reports that during 1997-98, children under the age of 18 participated in the armed conflicts of 36

countries, 27 of which involved soldiers under 15. Approximately 20 more countries, including the U.S., recruit children under age 18. Most child soldiers are 15 to 17 years old, but some are as young as 7. Because age documentation does not exist in many areas, children are frequently passed off as older than they are (Rädda Barnen, June 2001).

According to UNICEF data on child soldiers there are children under 15 years of age known to be serving in government or opposition forces in at least 25 conflict zones, and it is estimated that some 200,000 child soldiers under the age of 16 saw armed combat in 1988 (UNICEF, June 2001).

The United Nations more current statistics reveal that some 300,000 children are now fighting in more than 30 armed conflicts around the world (United Nations, June 2001). Thousands more either face recruitment or are members of armed forces not currently at war.

Some weapons, particularly today's assault rifles, make war child's play. Not only are these weapons readily available, they are light, simple to use, and require no training or maintenance. According the Small Arms Survey, (2001) the most popular weapons among child soldiers are the AK-47 and the M-16, although child soldiers have reported familiarity with other small arms as well such as Galils, AR-15's, Uzi's and 357 Magnums.

Poverty, the proliferation of small and cheap weapons, and the changing nature of warfare are major factors contributing to the growing phenomenon of child soldiers.

However it is not only the proliferation of small arms that enables the active participation of children in deadly conflict. The characteristics of these weapons, specifically assault rifles, guarantees the use of children in war.

# THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF THE ASSAULT RIFLE

## 4.1 History of the Assault Rifle

There are literally hundreds of types of assault rifles and variants of each type. For the purposes of this thesis I have focused on the five most popular assault rifles, and the ones most often used in interstate conflict: the AK-47, the FN, the M-16, the G-3, and the Uzi.

Assault rifles are the primary offensive weapons of modern troops. Today's assault rifles usually have calibers ranging from 5.56 mm to 7.62 mm, a magazine capacity of 20-30 or more rounds, selective full auto- and single-shot modes of fire, plus, in some models, 2 or 3 round burst mode. Effective rate of fire is up to 700 rounds per minute in full auto mode. Almost all assault rifles can be equipped with a bayonet, an optical or night vision scope/sight; some of them can also be equipped with an under-barrel grenade launcher or a rifle grenade launcher (rifle grenades are usually put on the barrel and fired with a blank cartridge).



classic design - AK74



bullpup design - Steyr AUG

Most of the world's recent assault rifles are designed in bull-pup configuration. This means that the butt-plate is attached directly to the receiver and handle with the trigger placed ahead of the magazine veil. The only major countries that still stick to conventional assault rifle design are Germany and Russia, where the latest assault rifles are manufactured in both 'classic' and 'bull-pup' styles.





The history of the assault rifle begins in the early 1910s, when the famous Russian armourer, Col.

Fedorov, designed a small-bore selective-fire rifle

with a detachable box magazine. This rifle was acquired by the Russian army in small numbers in 1916 and was used, albeit in very limited quantities, by the Russian and Soviet (Red) Army until 1925. While the design of the selective-fire rifle was not unique for that time, the concept of the "lightened" cartridge, more suitable for full-auto fire, was new.



In the 1930s Germany began research to develop a medium-power cartridge,

which would be much lighter and easier

to fire accurately in full-auto mode. This

development led to the 7.92 mm x 33 mm cartridge. The Germans developed some weapons designs for this load, including the MP-43 and Stg.-44. Further development of such designs were made by German engineers in Spain, and later in West Germany, and led to the HK-G3/G-41 family of assault rifles, commonly known as G-3's.



In 1943, in what was then the USSR, the Soviet Army

adopted the semi-automatic SKS rifle, and in 1947 the AK

(known in the West as the AK-47) was born. The AK was to become the world's first successful assault rifle, and one of the most widely used.

Designed by Mikhail T. Kalashnikov, the first AK-47s had a receiver that was part machined steel and part stampings with rivets holding everything together. This design proved to be less than robust in the field and was modified several times to gradually create a much tougher firearm.

In 1959 a tough, revamped model of the AK was introduced. This proved to be a superior design and is the key variant seen in all modern versions of this rifle manufactured in Russia. This model was designated the AKM (*Avtomat Kalashnikova Modernizirovanniy*) though it, too, is often referred to as an "AK-47" (as are the semiautomatic versions of the gun exported into the US). The AK-47 and variant models of this gun are made in the USSR, China, Finland, and most of the former Eastern Block countries make or have made their own versions of the rifle.

While there are other varieties of assault rifles, the AK-47 remains the most notorious. Its basic design has not changed much over the years, and while more modern weapons can withstand more abuse, and may have better parts and capability, their basic design is the same. Each year, as more of these weapons flood the market, more of the older weapons become available on the black or grey markets. These weapons never die, they simply move from conflict to conflict. Indeed, many of the weapons made during the 1950s are still in circulation today, and in use in interstate conflicts where, as we have seen, they are often carried by children (Brian McConaghy, personal communication, 2001). Manufactured in the former Soviet Union, and nine other countries, more than 70 million AK's have been produced in 100 different versions since 1947. Most of these are still in use by armies and insurgent groups in 78 countries. For instance, in Mozambique,

a country where a large number of these weapons reside, AK-47's bear the emblem of the national flag (Renner, 1997).

While the standard black market price for one of these weapons according to the Bonn International Center for Conversion is \$200, in countries with a large number of these weapons, prices are much lower. In Angola an AK-47 complete with ammunition can be bought for less than \$15, in some regions for as little as \$6, or simply exchanged for a bag of maize, or a chicken. Sam Cummings, an infamous arms dealer, once claimed, "there's enough weaponry throughout the Eastern Bloc to keep wars going for decades. It's scarcely worth the trouble to reload, you might as well just pick up another gun" (Small Armaments, May 2001).

## 4.2 Statistics of Assault Rifles

The following is a table, created from information from small arms manufacturers and the RCMP firearms division as well as personal communications with experts in this area.

Weapon	Length	Weight	Calibre/Velocity	Rate of Fire
AK-47	869 mm	4.3 kg	7.62x39mm/2365fps	600 rounds/minute
M-16	1000 mm	3.2 kg	5.56x45mm/3240fps	700 rounds/minute
G-3	1025 mm	4.4 kg	7.62x51 mm/2624 fps	550 rounds/minute
FN - FAL	1010 mm	4.4 kg	7.62x51mm/2700 fps	700 rounds/minute
Uzi	640 mm	3.5 kg	9x19mm/1300 fps	600 rounds/minute

According to the Small Arms Survey (2001), the AK-47 is by far the most popular of the assault rifles and has achieved unparalleled levels of availability in the global market.

While there are 70 to 100 million AK-47s, the AK-47 shares its fame with other weapons such as the M-16, the FN, the G-3, and the Uzi. The Israeli Uzi numbers about 10 million while there are approximately 8 million M-16's available globally. There are about 7 million of the German G-3 weapons. The Belgian FN comes next with about 5 to 7 million available (Renner, 1997, p.20). These numbers of course do not include privately owned firearms, which some experts believe may account for some 20 –25 million weapons.

In 1998 and 1999 one small arms expert, Michael Renner, conducted research and put together the following table outlining the numbers and types of assault weapons manufactured and available together within the country of origin. Today, according to small arms experts, the global number of assault rifles is placed at 100 to 125 million, and is still growing.

Type	Country of Origin	Number Manufactured (millions)	Number of Countries Using the Weapon	Number of Countries Manufacturing the Weapon
AK-47/-74	Soviet Union	70+	78	14+
FN-FAL	Belgium	5-7	94	15
M-16	United States	8	67	7
G-3	Germany	7+	64+	18

Let us clarify these numbers: using existing assault rifles and no other type of weapon in the small arms category, one could arm the entire population of Canada, every man, woman, and child, *more than four times over*. The average length of an assault rifle is approximately 90.88 cm. This means that if you laid these weapons end to end, you could cover a distance of 113,600 km, enough to circumnavigate the globe at the equator nearly three times over.

### **4.3 Why Examine the Assault Rifle?**

To date, most if not all the data on small arms and light weapons includes all weapons in this category; this fact blocks the progress of the micro-disarmament movement. . While it may be impossible to reach consensus on such a large and diverse group of weapons, it may be possible to begin with a single weapon within this category. The assault rifle is the most notorious of the small arms, the single weapon in this category responsible for the greatest number of civilian deaths. The small arms campaign should focus on the AK-47, FN, M-16, G-3 and other assault rifles for a number of reasons.

First, the AK-47 and similar weapons are potentially extremely powerful symbols for the micro-disarmament movement. The image of a child carrying this notorious weapon sums up an almost incomprehensibly complex and horrific issue in graphic, easily grasped terms, making a visceral appeal to the viewer.

Second, such a focus takes into account both the unique characteristics and ubiquitousness of the assault rifle, which can so easily be used by individuals to terrorize entire populations, and appears particularly adaptable to more recent forms of conflict.

According to one expert, the use of the assault rifle “is in accord with the nature of many contemporary conflicts, where the issue is less defence of a territory and more an intent to drive out certain population groups” (Michael Renner, personal communication, 2001).

Third, assault rifles are deadly. The assault rifle is the most frequent cause of civilian deaths in conflict, and should surely, therefore, be kept more resolutely out of the hands of non-state actors, particularly children. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (2000), over recent years a number of sources have cited figures that purport to document the proportion of civilians injured by weapons in various conflicts. Some of these sources put the proportion at 80% to 90% of all people injured. Almost all sources cite the assault rifle as the weapon that causes the most harm to civilians.

For these reasons, the assault rifle is the natural place to start. The characteristics that make this weapon lethal and attractive for the purposes of combat also, ironically, make it peculiarly marketable in terms of mobilizing public opinion, raising awareness of light weapons proliferation, and spreading the message of micro-disarmament.

## **4.4 Training and Use of the Assault Rifle by Children**

While there is no data specific to the assault rifle with regard to numbers of children carrying, using, training with, or being killed by assault rifles, certain known facts can assist us in determining the extent and effects of their involvement.

As I did my research, I realized that the only way to tackle a problem this huge, this forbidding, was to go back to basics - to go and handle the weapons themselves, in fact - to admit that these weapons have infiltrated so many levels of our economies, and

politics, so quickly and so thoroughly, that we seem to have forgotten to "feel", to realize the everyday impact they are having.

My direct research with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was helpful in determining how easily someone with little or no firearm experience could be trained to use an assault rifle with accuracy. After watching the weapon being fired, I was given the weapon but given no instruction. I have never before this moment seen or handled an assault rifle, nor any other type of firearm. As I picked up the assault rifle I was surprised at how lightweight and easy to maneuver it was. I was allowed to examine, handle, and play with this weapon, much as a child might play with or examine the weapon of an older sibling, or another child in his/her group. The magazine was curved, much like the ammunition when stacked together so the magazine could be loaded with ease. The interior of the magazine is grooved so bullets can only go in one way, mistake-proof.

Within a few minutes I was able to determine how to pull out the clip, load it, cock and fire it. Without shouldering the weapon, I was able to effectively aim and fire. The weapon was light, had no kick back when firing, and all of my shots were within the width of a compact car door. This really was child's play.

AK-47's are known in particular for their ease of production, their excellent performance under adverse conditions, and their ease of use and assembly - as reported in the Small Arms Survey (2001) the AK-47 has only nine moving parts, and at less than 4.5 kg, is very convenient for a child to use.

In a report presented to a United Nations conference on the issue, Canada stated that small arms are contributing to child deaths, injuries, violence and abuse as well as

making children more susceptible to military recruitment. "Children kill because they have the instruments to kill," according to retired Canadian general Romeo Dallaire, (CBC, July 11, 2001) who served in Rwanda during the 1994 massacres, in which as many as 800,000 people were killed.

Obviously moved, Dallaire stated that "in the hundred days of the Rwandan genocide, over 300,000 children were slaughtered...the bulk of these children were slaughtered by other children" (CBC, July 11, 2001).



## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

### **5.1 Outcome of the UN Conference**

The UN Conference sought to establish, strengthen, and recover social and legal protections from small arm abuse. The UN conference sought to advance international understanding and consensus in four primary areas of small arms management and control:

1. To strengthen or develop norms at the regional, national, and global levels that would reinforce and further co-ordinate efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trade in small arms;
2. To develop agreed-upon international measures to prevent and combat illicit arms trafficking and manufacturing and to reduce excessive accumulations and transfers of such weapons;
3. To mobilize political will throughout the international community to prevent and combat illicit transfers and manufacturing and to raise awareness of the character and seriousness of small arms and interrelated issues;
4. To promote state responsibility with regard to a broad range of measures to reinforce and further co-ordinate the export, import, transit, and re-transfer of small arms, and to encourage efforts to prevent, combat, manage, and eradicate illicit trade in these weapons.

At the UN conference a controversy emerged around the definition of the small arms problem as a human security, or a sovereignty issue. In their initial response, the United States' (and their supporters') perspective was that small arms were a necessary means to

establish and maintain sovereignty. The US made it clear that they would oppose any United Nations plan that included even the slightest suggestion of interference with the right to own guns. Canada, among others, responded that while it was recognised that the trade and use of small arms and light weapons are for the most part, legal, and that adults have the right to use and own guns, and this reality was not about to change, small arms was nevertheless a human security issue that needed to be urgently addressed. Canada and its supporters insisted that small arms and light weapons are a pre-eminent threat to human security, both personal and collective, due to their potential to fuel increased numbers and levels of violence and conflict.

Following the initial disappointing assertion from the US that small arms was a sovereignty issue and could not be dealt with from the perspective of human security, another voice made itself known. Senator Dianne Feinstein made the heartening statement that she took issue with the fact that the gun lobby and the Bush Administration, present at the UN conference, “were presenting other nations with a distorted view of American opinion on gun controls” and that “the majority of Americans would not approve of efforts by the United States to derail the talks here on an international agreement to tighten controls on light weapons.” Feinstein also took “strong exception” to the perception created by the Bush Administration and their supporters that Americans believe the United Nations are a threat to their right to own guns” (as cited in Crossette, NY Times, July 18, 2001).

She also challenged the frequently repeated assertions by American officials that the Second Amendment of the US Constitution guaranteed individuals the right to own guns. She said: “Mr. Bolton’s position on the Second Amendment is in direct contradiction to

decades of Supreme Court precedent... Not one single gun-control law has ever been overturned by the court on Second Amendment grounds” (as cited in Crossette, New York Times, July 18, 2001). Ms. Feinstein cited the example of the last attempt to claim constitutional protection for carrying a gun. In 1939 a man was arrested for carrying a sawed off shotgun over state lines; he later asked to have the case dismissed in Supreme Court and lost. Ms Feinstein pointed out that “if a sawed-off shotgun is not protected by the Second Amendment, why does the administration seem to be taking the position that the Second Amendment protects the international trafficking of shoulder-launched missiles?” (as cited in Crossette, New York Times, July 18, 2001). By the same token, why would it protect assault rifles being used by children?

Another highly contentious issue, which threatened to keep member states from reaching agreement, was the United States’ refusal to support consensus unless the requirement that governments consider legal restrictions on unrestricted trade and ownership of small arms and light weapons be stricken from the agreement. The United States also declared they would bar any measure that would keep governments from supplying small arms to “non-state actors”, such as rebel groups. This disturbed and angered African delegates, since, as Nigerian delegate Sola Ogunbanwu pointed out, “if you send arms to non-state actors, you are sending them to rebels who are trying to overthrow governments” (as cited by the Associated Press, New York Times, July 22, 2001). Under intense pressure and with considerable anger, Africa dropped its demand to keep the clause regarding non-state actors in order to achieve consensus.

Ultimately more than 170 nations managed to reach consensus over a diluted version of the plan to combat the illicit trade in small arms, after giving in to the United States’

demands to drop the requirement for governments to limit weapons sales and restrict gun ownership. This compromise left many African, European, and international human rights groups and NGOs angry at the United States (as cited by the Associated Press, New York Times, July 22, 2001).

The resulting agreement, which is not legally binding, requires states to ensure that manufacturers mark weapons with unique identifiable marks, and keep records to enable weapons tracing should the arms be illegally trafficked. It also requires governments to make and enforce laws to ensure control over the transfer of arms, and legislation for small arms brokers. States are urged to make illegal manufacturing, possession, stockpiling, and trade in small arms a criminal offence, and to destroy surplus caches. Public awareness campaigns of the consequences of trade, and international support for disarming after a conflict ends, are also encouraged.

Some NGOs are critical of the UN Conference, stating that it falls far short of expectations. For instance, the Conference sought only to produce statements of political principle, rather than producing legally binding measures with timetables for their development and implementation. Furthermore the UN Conference generated mainly reactive interventions such as improved customs detection of smuggled arms, and destruction of post-conflict surplus stockpiles; it did not adopt more proactive measures, including suggestions by the NGO community for greater transparency and monitoring of current military stockpiles, or state responsibilities such as export criteria and codes of conduct which prevent states from exporting arms to regions of conflict or areas where human rights abuses are taking place.

## **5.2 International Standards – What can be done?**

### **Code of Conduct**

In the *Small Arms Crisis: What Will Work* (2000), Bradley suggests that if sufficient political will is to be created to support an agenda to supply suppression, a code of conduct for arms will be necessary. Commitment to a code of conduct would help to encourage and reinforce responsible State behaviour. Such a code should bar the sale or transfer of small arms to any state that is ruled by a military dictatorship, that fails to respect the human rights of its citizens, that violates UN arms embargoes, or that cannot ensure the security of the weapons already in its possession. Obviously there will be disagreement about which states fail these tests, but the principle can nevertheless be asserted and practical measures taken to enforce it.

### **Restricting Sales to Non-State Actors**

In the *Small Arms Crisis* (2001), Bradley suggests building on the growing international interest in reaching agreement to restrict transfers of military types of small arms and light weapons to non-state actors. Bradley lists Canada as a proponent of such an accord, and states that the EU's Joint Action on Small Arms provides for "a commitment by exporting countries to supply small arms only to governments" (Smith and Bradley, 2000, p.14).

There are concerns among some states and civil society groups that, on its own, this proposal could be unbalanced. A more coherent approach would be for governments to adopt and adhere to strict criteria on the transfer of arms, thereby requiring all end users – governmental or not- to meet the same high standards of behaviour. Furthermore there is

a strong argument to be made that, beyond pistols and rifles, no non-state actors can really justify the need for weapons comprised in the usual definition of small arms and light weapons. It is also true that if governments enforced strict criteria for transfers, then an additional agreement to restrict supplies of weapons to non-state actors would be all the more legitimate and secure, in conjunction with programs for democratic development and reform of the security sector. In the meantime, it is equally true that cutting transfers of arms to non-states would enhance the security of civilians generally (Smith and Bradley, 2000).

### **International Norms**

The ultimate aim is to reduce human suffering and the threat to human freedoms that these arms represent. The immediate objective is to address those aspects of the problem that can be most effectively, and presently, tackled. Real and effective action will tend to solidify and strengthen international norms against uncontrolled and dangerous trade in arms. Similarly, the creation of international norms would reinforce legitimate and effective actions (Smith and Bradley, 2000).

According to Smith and Bradley, while it may take time to clarify and win support for these norms, like-minded countries are certain to support reforming action, even as others oppose it. The critical normative rule, as these events progress, is that the “right to arms” has limits. It does not extend, even for states, to the acquisition of arms for the purposes of engaging in genocide, or the oppression of peaceful political opposition, or the punishment of dissent. The right to acquire arms for self-defence carries with it an obligation to maintain such weapons under effective governmental control at all times, and to preclude their diversion for illicit purposes.

The creation of new and authoritative norms is neither as abstract nor as remote as is sometimes assumed. It is entirely practical to expect, for example, that an international consensus can quickly cohere around the control of small arms as a public health imperative – and thus an obligation under national and international law. For instance, the International Committee of the Red Cross is exploring how traditional standard concepts of “superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering might be invoked so as to impose prohibitions against the transfer or use of small arms” (Smith and Bradley, 2000, p.15).

## **Use of Technology**

Ultimately, any regime to control global trafficking in small arms and light weapons will only be as strong as the weakest link in the system. As long as illicit dealers enjoy safe havens in which they can operate freely, it will prove difficult if not impossible to enforce tougher international trade standards. It is therefore essential that the stronger participants in the system assist the weaker ones to establish effective and reliable mechanisms for policing the illicit market. As part of such efforts, two small arms experts, Jeffrey Boutwell and Michael Klare, have proposed that technology should be developed and deployed internationally that would assist in tracking the flow of small arms, identify illicit supply sources, and improve law enforcement and customs prosecution of illegal suppliers and traders. Developing computer databases and communications systems that can facilitate international cooperation would increase transparency of weapons flows (as cited by Smith and Bradley, 2000, p.14).

## **Licensing of Manufacturers**

The Small Arms Crisis paper also suggested that the UN conference

...should aim for an agreement that obliges all states to adopt legislative and other measures to control the manufacture of all types of small arms and ammunition through licenses, with an exception for pistols and rifles. Licenses should be required for the manufacture of small arms, and be subject to regular review and renewal.

(Smith and Bradley, 2000, p.9)

Smith and Bradley (2000) felt that all manufacturers should be obliged to make detailed information on production available to the relevant national authorities. Manufacturers must also ensure reliable record keeping and secure storage of manufactured goods. As the legal trade becomes more transparent, it will become more obvious how illicit inventories are originating and where they are flowing. Law enforcement agencies can then collaborate more productively to identify black market suppliers, and begin to suppress this covert trade.

## **Marking and Tracing of Weapons**

Smith and Bradley (2000) also suggested that the marking and tracing of weapons be addressed at the UN conference. In the belief that international efforts to prevent the diversion of arms to illicit markets could be strengthened by improving the capacity for tracing illicit weapons back to their source, they suggested three possible measures: 1/ to put systems in place to ensure clear and reliable marking of all weapons; 2/ adequate record-keeping for arms production, possession, and transfers; and 3/ international



arrangements to enable timely and reliable tracing of line of supply across the borders of relevant authorities. Marking weapons would assist intelligence officers in tracking weapons, and in tracing supply routes.

To date no international law with regards to this trade exists, and the success of regional organizations has been limited due to the absence of consistent political commitment and resources. As always with such agreements, the challenge lies in the implementation. So far, the OAS Convention and the ECOWAS have set the stage, but they lack the resources to carry out the set agenda.

While the UN conference is a beginning, there is much more work to be done, and concepts such as the use of technology, the establishment of international norms, the marking and tracing of weapons, and the licensing of manufacturers, have yet to be examined or developed further.

## **Recommendations of NGOs and Researchers**

To date, more than 250 non-governmental organizations are researching the small arms issue. A comprehensive review of the research and literature in the small arms field will yield similar themes within the recommendations for policy initiatives and change from non-governmental organizations, research institutions, and academia. The following is a summary of the themes found in such a review.

- Awareness of the Issue
- Standardizing Definitions and Documentation
- Improving Tracking Systems and using tracking as early warning systems
- Increasing International Transparency
- Increasing Government Accountability

- **Regulating Production and Export of Arms**
- **Regulating Brokers and Shippers**
- **Establishing Regional and International Frameworks for Control**
- **Controlling Production and Reducing global stockpiles of weapons**
- **Post conflict disarmament measures**
- **International Capacity Building**
- **Development, Implementation and Enforcement of International Norms**

Although the land mine treaty once seemed a natural model for an agreement that would prohibit most exports of small arms and light weapons, many advocates of small arms control have largely abandoned the goal of enacting such a single, all-encompassing method. It is acknowledged that eliminating all transfers of small arms between states will never receive the support of those countries that depend on imported weapons for their basic military and police requirements (Boutwell and Klare, 2000).

Furthermore, as the outcome of the UN conference makes evident, many countries, including the United States, China, and Russia also view guns as legitimate items of commerce, and are reluctant to embrace any measures that would restrict their trade. According to Boutwell and Klare (2000), while no widely accepted proposal describes how to accomplish these broad goals, arms control experts have agreed on five basic principles:

First, timely information on global trafficking in small arms must be available for the identification of dangerous trends, such as the stockpiling of arms into an unstable area,

and an international system of reporting be established to facilitate local and regional curbs on imports.

Second, strict standards for major military suppliers should be adopted for the export of weapons through legal channels. Although many countries are responsible for the manufacture of small arms, only a dozen or so countries are responsible for the majority of arms sold internationally. These include the five members of the UN Security Council (the US, Russia, China, the UK and France) and other European, Latin American, and Asian countries. If these countries could agree to a common system of restraints on exports, the sale of arms to areas of instability would decrease substantially.

Third, a system is needed to regulate the supply of small arms by decreasing global demand, particularly in areas of conflict and instability. While the ECOWAS Moratorium represents an agreement to restrict the import, export, and manufacture of small arms and stands as an important model for other regions to follow, a system needs to be implemented globally.

Fourth, efforts to control legal trade can only be partially effective unless steps are taken to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms. While the OAS and the Vienna Process have been active in attempting to curb this trade, recognizing the link between the illicit arms trade, drug trafficking, and crime, and having states criminalize the unauthorized production and transfer of small arms, must be considered in order to suppress the black market trade.

Fifth, the reintegration of former combatants and the collection and destruction of stockpiles of weapons after a conflict has ended, while certainly the most challenging aspect of the small arms problem, must be considered (Boutwell and Klare, June 2001).

While none of these initiatives can overcome the complexity of the problem of small arms proliferation individually, a multi-dimensional approach aimed at eliminating illicit arms transfers and imposing tighter controls on legal sales, may be the answer.

### **5.3 What Needs Further Examination?**

While all of the suggestions and recommendations made to date are not only valid but also attainable, little action has resulted. Why? This thesis, and the timing of the UN conference, suggests that the issue of small arms cannot remain a theoretical debate, and in fact both the UN and the Red Cross are examining definitions of sovereignty to allow their officers more freedom of action.

Academic research and policy recommendations, while valuable, do not change the world, and all too often they underestimate how passion and emotion can mobilize people, ignite public opinion, even compel governments to act. A "that's just the way it is we can't do anything about it" attitude is the most insidious kind of resignation. This was what was said about landmines, and the passion of one woman did what the objective research and analysis of a hundred NGOs couldn't: it made a difference.

While some critics question the viability or even the morality of using the connections between children and the assault rifle – specifically, the type of image included in this thesis – to promote micro-disarmament, an argument can certainly be made in support of such a focus. No one can deny that the image of a child holding and using one of these weapons is compelling, and it seems peculiarly appropriate that the very horror generated by pictures of this appalling reality should serve to inspire and motivate concerted action worldwide.

## 5.4 Conclusion - Proposal for Further Change

Despite all the groundwork of data collected and research published with regard to small arms proliferation, and the role and use of assault weapons in conflict, despite the staggering catalogue of civilian casualties, child soldiers, numerous human rights violations and atrocities, the progress of micro-disarmament remains astonishingly slow. What more is needed in order to propel this issue forward? Interviewed by *The Defence Monitor* in December 1998, Lloyd Axworthy was asked about the issues related to small arms, and responded: “they’re related, but that really means you have to work all the way from the grass roots level to the top international level over the next decade or so” (Centre for Defence Information, May 2001).

What can be done to persuade governments to eliminate the burgeoning stockpiles of weapons, control illicit trafficking of small arms, reduce the effects of war, and eradicate potential for new conflicts? How do we convince them that tackling the small arms issue and implementing recommendations by small arms experts will free up resources to improve lives? The United Nations believes the challenges of disarmament can be overcome with deliberate human action, strong institutional support, and public awareness. This writer believes that a systems approach to the small arms issue is the key.

While holding a conference at the UN Headquarters in New York to attempt to come to a global agreement on the issue is a good thing, it is only a beginning. Perhaps a conceptual framework could be applied to this issue, rather in the way that multi-track diplomacy utilizes a systematic approach for peacemaking and peace building.

The notion of multi-track diplomacy arose from the idea that there was more than one diplomatic way to approach any given situation. Joseph Montville of the Foreign Service Institute coined the term “track two” to describe diplomacy methods outside the formal government system. Multi-track diplomacy builds on the premise that there are several different levels of diplomacy, which, when engaged collaboratively and in inter-related ways, can be effective in resolving conflict and addressing issues that contribute to conflict. Multi-track diplomacy utilizes official government and non-government professionals, business, private citizens, research and education, activism, religion, private sector funding, and communications and the media (Diamond and McDonald, 1996).

While the small arms issue is certainly known to government, non-governmental organizations, and research organizations, the potential roles of the other sectors in propelling the micro-disarmament issue forward cannot be underestimated. In particular the potential power of business, the private citizen, and the media, is currently underrated. In the business field there may be potential for the provision of economic opportunities, international friendship, and support for the small arms issue. Private citizens may become involved through private voluntary organizations, non-governmental organizations, and special interest groups. The media can be instrumental in making the public and other sectors aware of the issue, the extent of the damage, and the potential for harm, and can play a role in shaping and mobilizing public opinion to exert pressure on government and drive this issue forward.

The role and use of these other sectors can affect thinking and action at the governmental level by spreading awareness and tapping into the power of individual emotional

reactions, thus laying the groundwork for more formal negotiations and reframing of policies to take place.

The extent and complexity of the small arms problem can either be taken as a guarantee that attempts at disarmament will fail, or as a clear signal that an original, multi-layered approach is essential, and urgently needed; since it is clearly impossible to tackle the whole thing at once, a piecemeal approach may be the answer. A global phenomenon demands a community approach, which begins at the individual level and moves up from there. As with any issue, change begins with awareness and education, and as a supplement to this project a PowerPoint presentation has been created for classroom use.

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## **Appendix A – Major Project Prospectus**

**Title of Proposed Major Project:** Blood and Innocence: An examination of the use of the assault rifle by children in deadly conflict

### **Overview of the Proposed Major Project:**

As stated in the Report on the Small Arms Crisis “the world’s deadly excess of small arms and light weapons has grown to become one of the greatest threats to the security of states – and of people. The uncontrolled trade in small arms has dramatically increased the availability of assault rifles, machine guns, and grenade launchers in regions where violence is pervasive. These weapons have claimed the lives of millions of innocent civilians in the last decade alone” (August 2000).

The problems caused by the widespread proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons are no longer in doubt. While light weapons and small arms are not the root cause of violence, they are responsible for making crime more violent and conflict more lethal. Easy access to light weapons and small arms, by legitimate purchase or via the black market, exacerbates violations of human rights, thwarts long term sustainable development and reconstruction and prevents the peaceful resolution of conflict.

The majority of conflicts today, particularly internal conflicts, are fought with light weapons and small arms. By one account, of all of the wars being fought at the beginning of 1995, light weapons and small arms were the main equipment used in all of them, and in the majority of them, the only equipment. Small arms are the weapons of choice for combatants for a number of reasons; they are cheap, durable, with few moving parts and little need for spares. Furthermore these weapons can be assembled, transported and used by anyone, even children.

Lightweight and easy to conceal, these weapons are also extremely attractive to smugglers, thus regions of conflict provide fertile ground for illicit weapons trafficking. For former combatants, without access to peaceful and sustainable livelihoods, weapons become a form of currency. In order to survive, they may use them for banditry or trade them in the civilian market for other goods. Once a conflict ends, it is often extremely difficult for authorities to regain control of weapons that have flooded the country.

It has become clear that the dangers posed by light weapons are far too serious to ignore, and many individual governments and institutions have sprung into action with initiatives to stem light weapons transfers at both the regional and international levels but while the humanitarian and security challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms have aroused international attention, little action has resulted. Unlike the issue of anti-personnel landmines, there is no easy answer to the problem of small arms.

To date, most, if not all the data on small arms and light weapons includes all weapons in this category. . It makes sense to begin by focussing on the weapon that is the most serious instrument in civilian deaths, and the one that causes the most harm – the assault rifle.

The image of a small child with an assault rifle on his shoulder and a necklace of ammunition immediately draws attention to the small arms problem and makes a compelling argument for micro-disarmament, but facts are missing. What is the role and impact of the assault rifle and what is its use in deadly conflict? Currently, of the combatants in global conflict, how many are children using assault rifles? How many child combatants are currently being trained to use assault rifles? Are child combatants being killed with assault rifles? How many? What measures, if any, can be undertaken to prevent this?

Research regarding the role and impact of the assault rifle and its specific use by children in deadly conflict is needed. If any, it will be the collection of *this* data that will promote public mobilization and ensure that the problem of small arms is known and the issue of micro-disarmament is thrust forward. From there, recommendations can be developed and measures implemented to begin to solve the identified problems.

### **Overview of Existing Literature:**

There is much information on the topic of small arms, small arms trade, and the proliferation and problem of small arms. While less information exists regarding disarmament and micro-disarmament research into these topics is not difficult to find. However, to date, most literature presents an aggregation of data on small arms. Little if anything is written specifically regarding the assault rifle or its use by children in deadly conflict. This needs to be done.

Small arms and light weaponry represents a very large category of weaponry. Small arms includes; pistols, rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, anti-aircraft, anti-tank weapons, and mortars. Tackling this entire category at best makes this issue complicated to present, discuss, or problem-solve and at worst, jeopardizes the chance of success for micro-disarmament initiatives.

While it is beyond the scope of this project to undertake to solve the global problem of small arms, or promise to provide definitive answers to the problem, it can begin to gather and present research that focuses on the use of one of the deadliest of the small arms - the assault rifle in the hopes of furthering the cause of micro-disarmament.

### **Relevance of the Proposed Topic:**

Conflict in its deadliest form is embodied in the small arms problem. The UN has acknowledged the magnitude of this issue and will be convening a conference in 2001 on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This project is timely as there exists an opportunity to move this initiative forward if data can be

gathered and presented which focuses on the use of the assault rifle by children in deadly conflict.

If global conflicts involving deadly force are the direct result of the proliferation and employment of small arms, small arms are tantamount to deadly conflict. Micro-disarmament then may well bring the answer of conflict resolution. This project would undertake to conduct research and gather data that is not currently available in order to contribute to conflict resolution measures that one day may be implemented on a global scale.

### **Table of Contents:**

#### **Chapter One: Disarmament and Micro-disarmament**

- 1.1 Definitions
- 1.2 The UN initiative and it's mission
- 1.3 The Global Issue of Small Arms
- 1.4 Barriers to disarmament

#### **Chapter Two: Legal Framework: International Law and Standards**

- 2.1 UN Convention and International Law
- 2.2 International Codes of Conduct for Arms Export

#### **Chapter Three: Monitoring Trade and Illicit Trade**

- 3.1 Weapons monitoring and Destruction
- 3.2 Utilizing Early warning to prevent conflict
- 3.3 Black Market

#### **Chapter Four: The role an impact of the assault rifle**

- 4.1 Statistics on the assault rifle (production, distribution, types of assault rifles, ammunition, etc...)
- 4.2 Why examine the use of the assault rifle? (most harm, types of wounds inflicted, etc...)
- 4.3 Facts on Child Soldiers
- 4.4 Training and use of the assault rifle by children

#### **Chapter Five: Where do we go from here?**

- 5.1 What we already know
- 5.2 Reducing Demand
- 5.3 The Role of Law, the Private Sector and Public Opinion
- 5.4 Recommendations for Change

### **Sources of Information and Research Methodology:**

This project will rely primarily on library resources, Internet research, and personal interviews with experts in the field of small arms. It will concentrate on the expertise

developed by individuals who study the small arms trade as well as the academic literature in this field.

The project will outline the disarmament movement and the progression toward micro-disarmament as well as the barriers to achieving these. It will focus then on the examination of legal issues and the monitoring of weapons and illicit trade of arms. It will then examine the logic behind the examination of the use of the assault rifle by children in deadly conflict and its role and use in achieving the goals of the United Nations initiative for micro-disarmament.

Since no research specific to the assault rifle and its use by children in deadly conflict is readily available, experts in the field of small arms will be contacted directly. These experts will provide their expertise and knowledge in this area in order to disaggregate the data and begin to examine the role of the assault rifle and its use by children in deadly conflict in the hopes of using this data to propel the micro-disarmament issue forward.

### **Major Project Timetable:**

Completion of the Literature Review: Jan.31, 2001  
 Completion of the Major Project Prospectus: Jan.31, 2001  
 Submission of Application for Ethical Review: Jan.31, 2001  
 Prospectus Approved by Supervisor and Sponsor: March.1, 2001  
 Completion of the Interviews: March.31, 2001  
 Completion of Research for the Major Project: April.30, 2001  
 Start writing the paper: May.1, 2001  
 First draft of Major Project Paper: May.30, 2001  
 Final draft of Major Project Paper: July.30, 2001

### **Working Bibliography:**

Carnegie Commission of Preventing Deadly Conflict  
 Report on the Small Arms Crisis: What will work  
 Small Arms and Light Weapons: The Epidemic Spread of Conflicts  
 The UN 2001 Conference: Setting the Agenda  
 Webster of the UN, International Red Cross, UNICEF, Amnesty International, and others  
 Articles and Publications

### **Proposed Major Project Supervisor:**

Robert Bedeski, PhD.  
 Professor  
 Department of Political Science  
 Box 3050 - University of Victoria  
 Victoria, BC V8W 3P5  
 (250) 721-7489

**Major Project Sponsor:**

Gordon Smith, PhD.  
Director  
Centre for Global Studies - University of Victoria  
Victoria, BC V8W 3P5  
(250) 472-4990

## **Appendix B - Questionnaire for Research Project**

**1/ In your opinion, what is the main purpose of the use of the assault rifle in deadly conflict in both intrastate and interstate conflict?**

**2/ Can you estimate, or can you tell me who may know, of the combatants in current global conflict, how many are children using assault rifles? This figure would include combatants who may be part of organized armies, as well as combatants of illegitimate or non-recognized armies.**

**3/ Can you estimate, or can you tell me who may know, the numbers of specific assault rifles currently available worldwide? Specifically, #'s of AK-47's, AK-74's, M-16's, Uzi's, and FN's.**

**4/ Can you estimate, or can you tell me who may know, how many child combatants within two age categories, a) 13-17 and b) 12 and under, in the world today? How many are currently being trained to use, or are actually using, assault rifles?**

**5/ Can you estimate, or can you tell me who may know, how many child combatants are killed with assault rifles? Can you estimate, or can you tell me who may know, how many non-combatant children are being killed with assault rifles?**

**6/ According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (2000), over recent years a number of sources have cited figures that purport to document the proportion of civilians injured by weapons in various conflicts. Many sources cite assault rifles as weapons that cause the most civilian deaths and injuries. Given that this class of weapons causes the most harm, does it make sense in your opinion, to gather data on assault rifles and children in order to establish broader public awareness and interest to exert pressure on governments to take the micro-disarmament issue seriously?**

**7/ If data specific to the assault weapons and its use by children is unavailable, is it sufficient to draw links between arms availability and numbers of child soldiers worldwide? Can inferences be drawn by examining available weapons within a geographic region and numbers of child combatants in the region? Why or why not.**

## Appendix C– Letter of Introduction

Re; Small Arms Thesis Project

I am currently completing a study on the use of assault rifles by children in deadly conflict. This study is supported by the Centre for Global Studies at the University of Victoria and is partial fulfilment of requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Analysis and Management from Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC. My academic supervisor for this project is Dr. Robert Bedeski who can be contacted at (250) 721-7489 and my sponsor at the Centre for Global Studies is Dr. Gordon Smith who may be reached at (250) 472-4990. Either of these individuals may be contacted at any time to verify the authenticity of this research project.

As you are likely aware, there are currently initiatives to stem light weapons transfers at both the regional and international levels but while the humanitarian and security challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms have aroused international attention, little action has resulted. Unlike the issue of anti-personnel landmines, there is no single answer (i.e.: ban) to the problem of small arms.

To date, most, if not all the data on small arms and light weapons includes all weapons in this category. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (2000), over recent years a number of sources have cited figures that purport to document the proportion of civilians injured by weapons in various conflicts. Some of these sources put the proportion at 80 to 90% of all people injured, others state those killed or injured at less than 60%, however many sources cite the assault rifle as the weapon which causes the most harm to civilians. It makes sense then to begin by focussing on the weapon that is the most serious instrument in civilian deaths, and the one that causes the most harm, the assault rifle.

While the image of a small child with an assault rifle on his shoulder and a necklace of ammunition immediately draws attention to the small arms problem and makes a compelling argument for micro-disarmament, facts are missing. The purpose of this study is to disaggregate the existing data and utilize data specific to the assault rifle and its use by children to mobilize public opinion and thrust the micro-disarmament issue forward. I would like to invite you to participate in this study by providing me with your expertise in this area and your assistance in extricating the data specific to the assault rifle and its use by children in deadly conflict globally.

This information will then be recorded and become supporting data for my thesis that will be housed at Royal Roads University in Victoria, BC, Canada. A copy will be made available to participants who request it.

You will find a questionnaire attached to this letter, I expect that answering the questions, should you choose to do so, will take less than one hour of your time. The University requires that I assure you that your participation in this study is purely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time, or not respond to this request whatsoever. Should you decide to complete the questionnaire however, it will be assumed that consent has been given.

Should you wish to contact me directly, or have any concerns or questions that you would like addressed prior to completing the attached questionnaire I may be reached at (250) 592-1009 or via email at [cjritchie@home.com](mailto:cjritchie@home.com). I thank you for your participation in this study.



## **Appendix D - Small Arms Experts Contacted**

**Olara Ottunu**  
**UN Special Representative on Children and Armed conflict**  
**United Nations, NY**

**Tonderai Chikuhwa**  
**Office of the Special Representative on Children and Armed conflict**  
**United Nations, NY**

**Dominick Donald**  
**Office of the Special Representative on Children and Armed conflict**  
**United Nations, NY**

**Peter Batchelor**  
**Director**  
**Small Arms Survey**  
**Geneva**

**Robert Muggah**  
**Researcher**  
**Small Arms Survey**  
**Geneva**

**Michael Renner**  
**Senior Researcher**  
**World watch Institute**  
**Washington, DC**

**Edward Laurance**  
**Executive Director**  
**Program on Security and Development**  
**Monterey Institute of International Studies**  
**Monterey, California**

**William Godnick**  
**Consulting- Research – Project Management**  
**Program on Security and Development**  
**Monterey Institute of International Studies**  
**Monterey, California**

**Lora Lumpe**  
**Consultant**  
**Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers**

**International Peace Research Institute**

**Michael Klare**  
Co-Director, Project on Light Weapons  
American Academy of Arts and Sciences  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

**Jeffrey Boutwell**  
Co-Director, Project on Light Weapons  
American Academy of Arts and Sciences  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

**Inspector Ken Gates**  
Executive Officer to the Deputy Commissioner  
RCMP Pacific Region

**Kenneth Brian McConaghy**  
Forensic Firearms and Toolmark Examiner  
RCMP Pacific Region

**Preben Marcussen**  
Coordinator  
Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers  
International Dept. of the Norwegian Red Cross

**Virginia Gamba**  
Director  
Arms Management Program  
Institute for Security Studies  
South Africa

**Clare Jefferson**  
Arms Management Program  
Institute for Security Studies  
South Africa

**Sami Faltas**  
Project Leader  
Surplus Weapons Project  
Bonn International Centre for Conversion  
Bonn, Germany

**Geraldine O' Callaghan**  
Senior Analyst  
British American Security Information Council  
London, UK

**Sarah Meek**  
**Light Weapons Programme Manager**  
**International Alert**  
**London, UK**

**Michael Crowley**  
**BASIC**

**Lieke Van de Weil**  
**UNICEF**

**Peter Herby**  
**International Committee of the Red Cross**

**Rachel Stohl**  
**Researcher**  
**Centre for Defence Information**  
**Washington, DC**