

FORUM:	Disarmament Commission
ISSUE:	Measures to Suppress Transnational Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons Destabilizing Fragile Sovereign States
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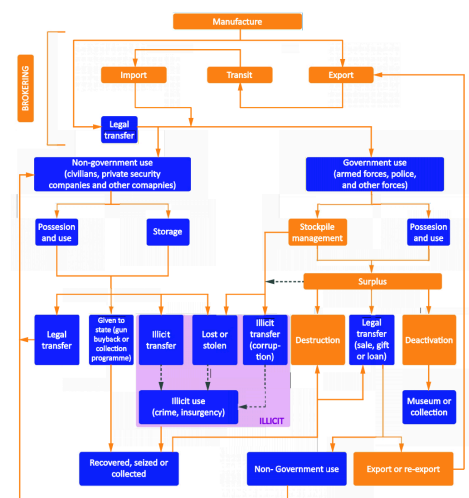
Introduction

Transnational illicit trafficking, is a global issue that causes terrorism and challenges political powers through the circulation of non-governmentally used firearms. In 2019 there were over 250,000 deaths recorded for weaponry homicides world-wide, with 71% of all global homicides as gun violence. There are more than 1 billion firearms in circulation globally with 85% of these firearms in the hand of private individuals, and majority of them owning illicit firearms illegally. With the estimation of EUR 125 million to EUR 236 million per million per year globally, illicit firearms trafficking market is increasing in an uncontrollable rate. These illicit weaponry trafficking are predominately in fragile sovereign states where the political government does not have absolute authority to track and control this market. These illicit firearms go in the hand of gang and individuals in fragile sovereign states, destabilizing the government through constant terrorism, leading to humanitarian issues, threatening the government and therefore destabilizing them, and impeding the nation's sustainable developments.

Background

Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) trafficking involves actions of illegal production, possession, circulation of firearms, violating national and international regulations.

Transnational trafficking is unauthorized cross-border transferring of firearms. Firearms from illicit trafficking comparing to other heavy weaponries, are small, portable, durable and easier to be concealed on the process of illegal transporting. The most prevalent type of small firearms trafficked in the world are Pistols; shotguns are most prominent in Africa and Asia; and Rifles are most common type of firearms in Oceania. Majority of the firearms in SALW trafficking were initially



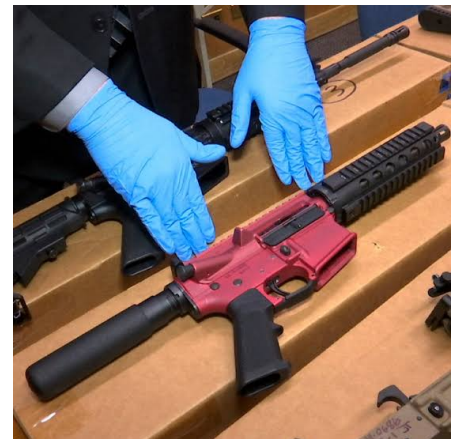
Graph of process of transferring non-government used firearms



manufactured legally. As shown in the graph below, throughout the process of transferring non-government used firearms, the firearms are sometimes lost or stolen. These lost or stolen firearms are later used as the most prevalent forms of trafficking: ‘ant trade’ (small quantities of smuggled SALW).

According to ESO (European Source Online), there are estimated 875 million SALW in global circulation, which the most prevalent locations are fragile sovereign states. SALW eventually became a major threat to fragile sovereign states, as it destabilizes the states with terrorism and crime caused by these firearms. As firearms are perpetuate 4 in 10 homicides, SALW trafficking not simply a illegal set of trading for economic benefits, but also a catalyst for major political crisis that should be restricted for any reasons,

Unfortunately, the SALW trafficking is a emissive association, as it is a complex system for the world to restrict it. First, these illicit weapons have a high value in black markets, with the illicit arms trading worth \$1.7-\$3.5 billion per year. Individuals that are included in this illegal trafficking receives huge incentives from this process, engaging civilians in states with high poverty rates. Due to this reason, the SALW trafficking are growing in an uncontrollable rate each year. Secondly, the illicit trafficking occurring in every corner where the government intervention is not reached. Even the data about ammunition flows are hard to obtain. By the lack of accurate data and information of this black-market system, it is even more challenging for nations to make corresponding regulations towards it. Third, the SALW trafficking methods and technologies are developing alongside.



3D printed ghost guns

Recently, the 3-D printed “ghost guns” without serial numbers had been flourishing in the black-market, expanding the trafficking into a large scale. Traffickers are developing diverse sneaky methods to trick government associations to increase their success rate in illegal trafficking. And last and the most essential reason is inconsistent implementation of regulations by the sovereignty states’ porous nature of borders, weak institutional capacities, and political instability. SALW is often associated with other powerful illicit trade that plays a major role in the economy. Illicit weapons, drugs, and other illicit trading markets run through the hands of the major gangs; however, as the sovereign state is destabilized, these trading markets become the main source of running the economy for the country. This creates an ongoing cycle: civilians gain access to illicit firearms, increasing corruption and eventually strengthening armed groups, which in turn increases the frequency of political corruption. This cycle makes the peace initiative less appealing to fragile states, further deepening state fragility. A sovereign state's primary attribute is its ability to control its territory and borders. As a result, the inability to effectively control territorial borders undermines state sovereignty, creating an ongoing



cycle in which transnational SALW trafficking both exploits and deepens state fragility, ultimately weakening the foundational governance structures needed to combat illicit flows.

Problems Raised

Terrorism arising from firearms and humanitarian threats

The availability of illicit SALW is a "transnational chain of violence" across borders, as it is a key driver of armed conflicts, terrorism, and organized crimes. According to the Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015, at least 50800 people had died violently every year from 2007-2012, including international homicides and legal intervention, and firearms are used in 44% of all violent deaths.

Especially for sovereign states that are already vulnerable due to different political conflicts, the access to illicit firearms only exacerbates the crisis. This weaponry usually flows into the hand of gangs and violent associations that tend to control territories, protect illicit economy and those who are trying to expand their political influence. This results in killing peacekeepers and blocking humanitarian access. To stabilize the sovereign states, the prevention of SALW trafficking would be a major step.



Illicit trafficked weaponries

This terrorism has correlation with humanitarian issues. The terrorism caused by SALW trafficking often involves sexual violence. For example, ever since the armed conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces began in April 2023, the UNHRC in Sudan had received reports of 95 victims, 75 women, one man, and 19 children, mainly coming from sovereign regions from Khartoum State and the Darfur. The UNIDIR reported approximately 70%-90% of sexual violences are reported to involve firearms. There are clear correlations between illicit weapon and sexual violence occurred through threats. Additionally, experts had claimed that, through interviews some cases of sexual violence occurred towards women and girls are later forced to participate illicit transnational trading as traffickers by sexual violence being reportedly used to coerce them with compliance.

Undermining Sustainable Development of Fragile States

Globally, the economic cost of this violence had reached around \$22.6 billion in 2023, even exceeding the total Official Development Assistance for health with \$21.8 billion and education with



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\$14.4 billion. Due to the widespread impact of SALW trafficking, the humanitarian assistance funds are tending to focus more on SALW trafficking, rather than other important humanitarian associations for the sovereign states. Specifically, because sovereign states are vulnerable to political and social instability, they often lack the capacity to meet humanitarian needs. In the CARICOM (Member States of the Caribbean Community) statement from UN they recognized the act of SALW trafficking as "undermines the rule of law, and destabilizes small and vulnerable states" and emphasized the importance of education as a major system that can develop "sustained, predictable, and targeted international assistance", to make improvements by "strengthen national control systems, law enforcement capabilities, and border security."

International Actions

Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA)

Due to the increase severity of SALW trafficking issues in the mid-1990s, the UN had finally considered this crisis and made further actions towards. The UN 'Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects' (PoA) was a resolution from the



The 8th Biennial meeting of States on the PoA

open debate 54/54 V in December 1999, that officially established in the July of 2001. Their objective was binding political sets of commitment for nations to develop and implement practical measures for SALW control and curbing the illicit trade by culminating adoption of Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) for different nations. The PoA had successfully established other associations such as National Coordination Agency (NAC) for political guidance, research, and monitoring and Nation Point of Contact (NPC) for initiating cooperation with other states, that still plays a key role for restricting SALW trafficking.

Global Firearms Programme (GFP)

The Global Firearms Programme (GFP) was launched in 2011, as a part of European Union's (EU) Global Illicit Flows Programme (GIFP). Supplementing the United Nations Conventions against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), they worked to prevent counter-illicit manufacturing of firearms



and the transnationally organized crimes and terrorism resulting from it. The programme had made notable achievements such as increased ratification of Firearms Protocol, improvements in criminal justice responses and improvements on capacities for firearms control.

Key Players

Haiti

According to United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNDIR), In February 2026, Haiti has been reported to have estimated 500,000 illicit firearms circulation. Haiti is a sovereign state that has a unstable authority and political force, fitting the perfect location for illicit firearm trafficking avoiding the government's sight. These illicit firearms go to the hand of big gang association in Haiti whom constantly challenges the political force through continuous terrorism. In 2024, Haiti had around 5601 killed specially from gang violence. Not only does these gang violence causes death, it also affects the civilians to flee their homes and face acute hunger. Additionally, these illicit firearms gained from gangs leads to serious sexual violences. Between September 2025, the UN had verified 1361 cases of sexual violence with inclusion of armed actors. Among these cases, there were 1452 survivors with 90% of women and 139 cases involving children.



Due to the severity of the issue in the country, the Haitian government had made numerous efforts for law enforcements of illicit firearm trafficking. The Haitian government participated on the UNODC Japan Border initiative to establish new control units and enhance reports to strengthen their response towards illicit trafficking. The OAS SECURE Haiti Program was launched for improving Haitian polices' capabilities on border controls. Additionally, they had implemented numerous projects for training, such as the ENFORCE project, to enhance their knowledge on firearm trafficking and cover the key aspects of international and national legal frameworks, firearms tracing, and investigative techniques.

United States

Research had revealed that majority of illicit trafficked firearms had all originated from the United States. As the main country contributing to this issue, the US had made numerous responses corresponding to it. The US had had efforts by making contributions to drive cross border investigations, make law enforcements by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Homeland Security Investigations (HIS) and the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) advanced tech detect and intercept firearms shipments to enforce the US exports controls. US had especially made law



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enforcements to support specialized units of vetted foreign law enforcement officials who works directly with US investigators. Collaborating with the Caribbean regions, the US developed Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, collaborates with the Regional Security System (RSS) to detect and disrupt illicit maritime trafficking in the Eastern Caribbean and donated C-26 maritime patrol aircraft, and works with works with Caribbean law enforcement agencies to dismantle Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) that has linkages with South America and Mexican trafficking groups too.

Possible Solutions

Strengthening Firearms Tracing and Evidence-Based Investigations

The technological improvements that the traffickers are developing overtime is going out of hand. Only the development of a sophisticated technology to track these advance technologies can bring further inspections towards this issue. However, the deployment of advanced surveillance tools, such as communication monitoring and GPS tracking of suspected trafficking routes, has been impeded due to strict judicial oversight, slowing the progress. A more efficient solution is possible only through reforming legal frameworks to enable for SALW-specific tracing operations. This would eventually allow investigator with data of high accuracy and real-time data. Furthermore, investing in centralized, cross-referenced firearms with the inclusion of linked seizure data, ballistics reports, and trafficking patterns would be able to provide evidence supply crime chains more effectively, allowing better responses towards the issue. By focusing these investigative techniques exclusively on SALW trafficking networks, governments can develop specialized responses that directly counter the evolving tactics of arms traffickers.

Mutual legal assistance

As transnational illicit firearm trafficking is occurring with the inclusion of two or more nations, coordination of mutual legal assistance needs to be improved to make a more effective investigation and legal restrictions. Mutual legal assistance is a form of cooperation between countries for the collection and exchange of information from their investigations. By requesting mutual legal assistance, the authorities can ask for and provide evidence from another country to assist in criminal investigations or proceedings there. Due to the complex nature of SALW trafficking occurring with the involvement of different countries, mutual legal assistance is the only possible solution to bring all nations to collaborate and make further investigation targeting specifically SALW trafficking. Additionally, by developing a more effective mutual legal system, investigators can access financial details, court documents, witness statements, and forensic evidence to obtain timely information across nations and share it among law enforcement agencies to punish traffickers and prevent future offenses.



Glossary

SALW trafficking

Process of illegal production, possession and circulation of illegal firearms trafficked through without the intervention of government body

Ghost guns

3D printed ghost guns that does not have serial assigned to it, developing as a major firearm trafficked in SALW

National Coordination Agency (NAC)

A body established under the UN PoA to provide political guidance, research, and monitoring on SALW control at the national level.

Ant trade

A form of illicit firearms trafficking involving the smuggling of small quantities of weapons across borders, often through individual couriers or concealed shipments, making detection difficult.

CARICOM

The Caribbean Community, a regional organization of Caribbean states that coordinates economic, social, and security policies

National Point of Contact (NPC)

An official designated under the UN PoA to facilitate communication and cooperation between states on SALW-related matters.

Programme of Action (PoA)

A 2001 UN resolution committing states to develop and implement practical measures for SALW control and curbing illicit trade.

UNIDIR

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, which provides research and analysis on disarmament and security issues

UNTOC

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, an international treaty providing a framework for combating organized crime

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