



## Disarmament and International Security Committee

### *Topic 2: The issue of trade of illegal arms on the black market and on the dark web Research*

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#### 1. Key terms

**Black market:** It is the illegal trade of goods that are not allowed to be bought and sold by the law.

**Grey market:** It is a market in which goods have been manufactured by or with the consent of the brand owner but are sold outside of the brand owner's approved distribution channels. This activity can be perfectly legal and therefore it should not be confused with black market (Investopedia).

**Dark web:** It is an encrypted part of the internet, it is therefore protected by a secret code. It is usually used for criminal activity.

**Small arms:** Individual-service kinetic projectiles firearms such as handguns, shotguns and rifles.

**Light weapons:** infantry-portable weapons either crew-served kinetic firearms, incendiary devices or shoot explosive munitions.



**Heavy weapons:** Weapons that are too big to be transported by foot and therefore have to be fixed on platforms installed upon wheeled frames/vehicles, vessels, aircraft or fortifications.

## 2. Introduction

Thanks to the development of new technologies, the illegal trade of arms has become an increasingly serious issue. This illegal market represents one of many sources of revenue of organised criminality. Illegal trading is therefore considered a threat to peace, security and sustainable development in many regions of the world. The low costs and the easiness in purchasing those arms is in fact contributing to spread violence and foment the current conflicts. The great availability and ease of purchase of armaments was in fact a determining factor in more than 250 conflicts during the past decade, which led to over 50,000 deaths each year. Moreover, over time, the dark web has evolved into a criminal hub as it provides anonymity and therefore represents a bigger obstacle for law enforcement. Small arms and light weapons are the most bought on the dark web since they can be easily disassembled and then shipped using regular mail. Larger weapons and explosives are also available on the web but their shipping is more challenging and as a consequence they are also more difficult to find. Many arms bought online also come with manuals that explain how to disassemble, construct and assemble other weapons. The proliferation of armaments, as well as the wrong onset of new technology, has created a dangerous global issue that urges to be solved.

## 3. Major countries involved

Arms trafficking is usually widespread in those regions that suffer from political instability.

Currently, for example, approximately 30 million firearms are being circulated through Africa and as a consequence the illegal trade of small armaments has been blamed for the persistence of violent conflicts across the continent. Traffickers choose Africa as the destination of their trades because of the need of physical space in order to build infrastructures where they can store armaments waiting to be sold; those infrastructures need to be hidden far from big cities in order to be more difficult to localize. The African territory results appropriate for this purpose. During the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia for example light and heavy weapons were illegally shipped to all sides. Those



armaments meant to be legally shipped from Uganda to Slovakia but they were diverted to Guinea and later transported in the conflicting territories.

Europe represent one of the major exporters of illicit arms. United Kingdom, France and Germany are in fact highly involved exporters. The EU is in fact the second largest arms supplier worldwide (27% of the world's arms exports), after the United States (34%) and before Russia (22%). Many members States of the UE are accused of illicit sale of arms to Saudia Arabia and Yemen.

The USA is the first largest arms exporter. Moreover thanks to USA financial aid Israeli military-industrial complex has undergone a major development, making also Israel an important exporter of sophisticated weapons. The United States is the primary source of Israel's far superior arsenal.

Russia is the third world's largest arms exporter. The re-opening of many conflicts on the African continent has encouraged the illegal arms trade between the two continents. Russia in order to enter the arms market in Africa has had to cope with the growing military development of China. According to the London Institute for Strategic Studies in fact, two-thirds of African countries use equipment produced in China. Ukraine, Bulgaria, Belarus and Moldova are moreover part of the grey market network of small arms. Gaps in international law are being exploited to export weapons from a legal supplier to unauthorized recipients through the falsification of documents.

#### 4. Historical background

There are many previous cases of illegal arms trafficking:

The Iran-Contra affair for example was a political scandal that occurred in The United States between 1985 and 1987. Some administration officials were accused of facilitating the sale of arms to Iran that at that time was subjected to arms embargo.

The intensification of the conflict in Bosnia, between 1992 and 1995, led to a prosperous illegal arms market. The Serbian army bought large quantities of smuggled war material from Soviet depots. Several former members of the Soviet army had created fictitious companies in order to cover up arms trafficking with the Serbian military and paramilitary forces. The turnover was extremely high, it was in fact about hundreds of millions of dollars. During the Cold War there was an arms race between the two superpowers, the US and the URSS. Through the illegal arms trade, the two powers intended to confirm their military supremacy in order to incite fear to potential adversaries. This led to a large circularization



of weapons, often illegal. the US, however ,boasted the exclusive possession of the atomic bomb, which represented a huge advantage but also an extremely dangerous threat.

## 5. UN involvement

In recent years the United Nations has enhanced its efforts to combat the problem regarding the commerce and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). In order to tackle this issue in 2001 the member states agreed on the United Nations Programme of Action (PoA), which establishes a global framework for activities to prevent, combat and eradicate the illegal trade of SALW. Through said Framework Member states as well as regional organizations are able to carry out measures to combat the illicit proliferation of SALW. Yet the only legally binding instrument to counteract the illegal manufacture and trade of weapons is the Firearms Protocol, which was enabled on the 3rd of July 2005. Its aim is to ease the control and regulation of illicit arms and arms trade and to avoid their deviation into the illegal circuits controlled by organized crime organisations. All in all the firearms Protocol is designed to promote and strengthen international cooperation and the development of a system able to prevent, combat and eradicate the illegal manufacture and traffic of arms, their parts and ammunition.

The campaign to eradicate this issue has reached many objectives such as:

- The installation of instruments to monitor official arms transfers
- The establishment of a global framework for international activities regarding this topic
- The calculation of financial loss of the global economy due to illegal arms trade conducted through illegal paths, such as the dark web or the black market

In order to enforce the possibility of action of the member states, the UN Office on Drug and Crime is training law enforcement personnel on the topic and on how to conduct effective investigations to combat operations carried out by the organized crime. In addition the International Police Organization (INTERPOL) is cooperating in this objective.

## 6. Useful links

<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/sustainable-development-goals-and-substantial-reduction-illicit-arms-flows>



GeMUN  
Genoa Model United Nations

Affiliated with



<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/sixty-first-general-assembly-first-committee-disarmament-and-international-security>

<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/un-role-and-efforts-combating-proliferation-small-arms-and-light-weapons>

<http://intpolicydigest.org/2015/01/05/guns-weapons-illegal-trade/>