

**Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)**

**Delegation: The United States of America**

**Delegate(s):** [REDACTED]

**School:** [REDACTED]



---

## **Topic 2: Small Arms and Light Weapons Trafficking**

In Khartoum, Sudan's capital, the lack of transparency in arms transfers has empowered systemic human capital loss. The Second and Third Sudanese Civil Wars have resulted in ongoing political turbulence and ethnic strife. Factions have become increasingly desperate for power and seek small arms and light weapons—increasingly from illegitimate channels. For instance, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been linked to selling weapons to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan through opaque transactions like disguising arms transfers as commercial or humanitarian aid.<sup>1</sup>

While states and corporations justify these deals by declaring they are necessary for national security or align with diplomatic objectives, their unmonitored implementation has led to unmitigated destruction. For example, in Darfur, small arms originally designated for national defense have been repurposed and placed in the hands of militias accused of widespread atrocities, including the mass killing of civilians.<sup>2</sup> With the lack of accountability and transparency in these transfers, international institutions have struggled to effectively enforce embargoes in crisis zones—like those in Haiti—and prosecute and punish the offenders.

In response, the United States has placed itself as a key leader in promoting regulations to limit and organize small arms and light weapons trafficking. For instance, the United States

---

<sup>1</sup> Besheer, Margaret. "US Official: Arms to Sudan's Warring Parties 'Must Stop.'" *Voice of America*, 7 Mar. 2024, [www.voanews.com/a/us-official-arms-to-sudan-s-warring-parties-must-stop-/7517228.html](http://www.voanews.com/a/us-official-arms-to-sudan-s-warring-parties-must-stop-/7517228.html).

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International. "New weapons fuelling the Sudan conflict." *Amnesty International*, 13 Aug. 2024, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2024/07/new-weapons-fuelling-the-sudan-conflict](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2024/07/new-weapons-fuelling-the-sudan-conflict).

co-sponsored the International Tracing Initiative (ITI).<sup>3</sup> This landmark initiative mandates that firearms be uniquely marked for identification, and international cooperation guarantees, and builds the capacity to trace weapons transfers.<sup>4</sup>

Internationally NATO, which enlists the participation of 32 member countries including the U.S. also supports the international effort to eliminate illicit trade of weapons by endorsing initiatives led by the UN such as the PoA. NATO also educates the global community by holding an annual class regarding small arms and light weapons as well as the use of mines.<sup>5</sup> On a larger scale, the U.S. has maintained its support of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA) since its adoption in 2001. Through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (AFT), the U.S. regulates the domestic travel of small arms and light weapons (SALW) through the National Tracing Center.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the AFT's Project Gunrunner has worked to combat the trafficking of firearms as a national initiative. This is a part of the Department of Justice's Southwest Border Initiative, which as a whole, works in collaboration with many organizations such as the Drug Enforcement Administration and Criminal Division to combat threats of terrorism, trafficking of illicit weapons and drugs, and violence.<sup>7</sup> From this, the U.S. has expanded its capacity to trace firearms in Mexico through increasing the number of gun

---

<sup>3</sup> "International Instrument To Enable States To Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons." *United Nations Digital Library*, 2005, [digitallibrary.un.org/record/559519?v=pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/559519?v=pdf). Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. *International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons*. 1 Jan. 2005, [www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/Firearms/ITI.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/Firearms/ITI.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> "Small arms and light weapons (SALW) and mine action (MA)." *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 4 Oct. 2023, [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52142.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52142.htm). Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Parker, Sarah, and Katherine Green. *A Decade of Implementing the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons Analysis of National Reports*, [unidir.org/files/publication/pdfs/a-decade-of-implementing-the-unpoa-analysis-of-national-reports-en-301.pdf](https://unidir.org/files/publication/pdfs/a-decade-of-implementing-the-unpoa-analysis-of-national-reports-en-301.pdf). Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.

<sup>7</sup> "Strategic Goal II: Prevent Crime, Enforce Federal Laws, and Represent the Rights and Interests of the American People FIGHTING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY ON THE U.S. SOUTHWEST BORDER." *Department of Justice*, [www.justice.gov/archives/jmd/file/44431/dl?inline](https://www.justice.gov/archives/jmd/file/44431/dl?inline). Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.

dealer compliance inspections along the Southwest border.<sup>8</sup> Though the U.S. supports the goal of combating the illicit trade of SALW, the nation does not favor imposing any restrictions that would infringe on the Second Amendment rights of its citizens as permitted in the Constitution. This also applies to numerous other nations that also maintain that their citizens have the right to bear arms, including Switzerland and the Czech Republic.<sup>9</sup> As a result, it is important to recognize that the participation of global citizens is necessary in order to effectively implement a solution, so clauses must also allow citizens in these nations to exercise the rights to which they are granted.

When looking at initiatives to regulate SALW transfers and transactions, we must ensure that we do not infringe on states' and corporations' sovereignty. Limiting who states may provide weapons to—especially based on arbitrary designations created by international bodies—is innately an overreach and as nations a part of any international jurisdiction may act in their interest to permit or restrict transfers. In addition, in contrast to transparency, private corporations wishing to export weapons are already heavily regulated. In most cases, states—including the United States—require private corporations to obtain licenses for all weapons transfers to ensure weapons are not sent to nations or organizations with goals mutually exclusive with peace and human rights efforts.<sup>10</sup> Defense industries are crucial for maintaining national security and ensuring the safety of citizens, providing governments with the means to defend themselves against both internal and external threats. International efforts to prosecute or manage these industries would be counterintuitive, and any efforts aimed at ensuring weapons

---

<sup>8</sup> *Review of ATF's Project Gunrunner*. Nov. 2010. U.S. Department of Justice, [oig.justice.gov/reports/ATF/e1101.pdf](https://oig.justice.gov/reports/ATF/e1101.pdf). Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.

<sup>9</sup> McCarthy, Kevin E. "Gun Laws in Switzerland." *CGA*, 31 Aug. 1999, [www.cga.ct.gov/PS99/rpt%5Colr%5Chtm/99-R-0845.htm](http://www.cga.ct.gov/PS99/rpt%5Colr%5Chtm/99-R-0845.htm).; Cameron, By Rob. *Czech Republic MPs vote to tighten gun laws*. 26 Jan. 2024, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-68110357](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-68110357)

<sup>10</sup> "Transfer of Defense Articles: U.S. Sale and Export of U.S.-Made Arms to Foreign Entities." *Congressional Research Service*, edited by Christina L. Arabia et al., Mar. 2023, [crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46337](https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46337). Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.

are only granted to specific groups or organizations is an example of a breach of free corporation's sovereignty.

Direct infringement on a state's ability to disperse permits or mandated international permits for weapons transfers is counterintuitive to the goals of state sovereignty and democratic efforts. Instead, states should be recommended to implement laws that ensure private defense corporations wishing to partake in such industries take further steps to obtain a license. For instance, the United States' International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) is a federal law that requires contractors to receive authorization from the state before exporting weapons.<sup>11</sup>

Efforts like the International Tracing Initiative (ITI) must be reproduced when looking at steps to ensure safe and legitimate weapons transfers. This can be achieved by mandating access to internationally organized investigations into weapons trafficking, facilitating assistance, sharing information on arms seizures, and ensuring firearms are uniquely marked for identification. International organizations can strengthen cooperation through these strategies, making weapons transfers more transparent and reducing the likelihood of illicit activities. Ensuring that all weapons transfers are conducted transparently and in compliance with international law can serve to promote peace, uphold human rights, and protect both regional and global security.

However, when considering the broader implications of arms exports, it is essential to look beyond immediate destinations. The weapons the international community exports must not only be assessed for where they will end up tomorrow, but we must also ask ourselves where they will be in five years, in twenty years. Such foresight is crucial in minimizing the risks of

---

<sup>11</sup> "The International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)." *U.S. Department of State Directorate of Defense Trade Controls*, [https://www.pmdtc.state.gov/ddtc\\_public/ddtc\\_public?id=ddtc\\_kb\\_article\\_page&sys\\_id=24d528fddbfc930044f9ff621f961987](https://www.pmdtc.state.gov/ddtc_public/ddtc_public?id=ddtc_kb_article_page&sys_id=24d528fddbfc930044f9ff621f961987). Accessed 17 Nov. 2024.

unintended consequences, including exacerbating violence, fuelling conflict, or enabling human rights abuses far beyond the scope of the original transaction, but must be considered to promote global peace and human rights efforts.