

DISEC: Topic 1

Prevention of Arms Trafficking into Latin America

Around the globe, many countries witness the dangers of illicit arms trafficking. Latin America is no different. These countries face a growing level of instability due to regional conflicts, organized crime and hostile armed organizations. Although a number of these transactions are conducted on a smaller scale by private actors, there are instances in which state actors supply resistance groups in order for a more favorable government to form. Due to the nature of the demand for illicit arms, small arms are preferred for their ease of use. This, in turn, causes the stability of a region to decrease, especially as civilian casualties and human rights violations accrue.

One of the major efforts by the international community to curb illicit arms trafficking comes in the form of the Wassenaar Agreement. While the agreement does not prohibit the sale and distribution of arms, it does express the sentiments for participating states to take greater responsibility. Despite the ideals established in the Wassenaar Agreement, each participating state can choose whether or not to allow an item within its borders as well as adopt suggested policies regarding exports.

A key problem with clearly establishing the true threat of illicit arms trafficking is that the estimates and figures are predominately speculation. Part of this is due to the nature and use of small arms: small scale skirmishes involving at least one non-state actor. Another reason there is not much data regarding small arms in particular is that countries would have to provide information about all of the weapons in their possession.

Latin America's development of illicit arms following the globalization of organized crime is of particular interest to the committee. Essentially, terrorist groups and drug cartels combined forces in order to not only sustain themselves, but also find areas to expand. This results in increased arms, predominately from parts of Asia and Eastern Europe as well as the United States. One other reason illicit arms trafficking is prevalent in Latin America is the large borders with low population densities many Latin American countries possess. This greatly hinders efforts to effectively regulate arms within Latin America, especially after the disappearance of confiscated weapons from prior conflicts.

Questions to Consider:

- 1 What efforts can/should countries make to curb illicit arms dealing?

- 2 How should countries address the sale and distribution of arms within their own borders?
- 3 How can policies regarding transparency be expanded?
- 4 What should be the recommended procedure during the life cycle of a particular weapon?

Sources:

<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/transfers/illicit-trafficking.html>

<http://www.wassenaar.org/introduction/index.html>

<http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/SALW/>

<http://unidir.org/pdf/articles/pdf-art917.pdf>

