

Small Arms Trade and Proliferation in East Asia: Southeast Asia and the Russian Far East

**Robert E. Bedeski
Andrew Andersen
Santo Darmosumarto**

**Institute of International Relations
University of British Columbia**

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About the Authors

Robert E. Bedeski received his doctorate in Political Science at the University of California at Berkeley, and is Professor of Political Science at the University of Victoria. He has written books, articles and papers on domestic and international politics of China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. He is currently engaged in several projects on Human Security, and Arms Control and Verification on the Korean Peninsula.

Andrew Andersen received his doctorate in Political Science at the Moscow Lomonossov State University. He has written extensively on Russian criminal networks, Russian politics, and regional problems in Central Asia. He lectures at Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria, and Camosun College, and is presently co-director of the North Pacific Institute of Criminology and Crime Prevention.

Santo Darmosumarto received his undergraduate degree in Political Science at the University of British Columbia, and is currently completing his MA at the University of Victoria. He has focussed on maritime and non-military security concerns in the Asia-Pacific region and is presently conducting research on China's foreign policy and piracy in the South China Sea.

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Abstract

This project will examine the extent of small arms trade and proliferation in two geographical areas of East Asia — Southeast Asia and the Russian Far East. These two areas have significant possibility of experiencing small arms proliferation problems because of ethnic, cultural and political diversity, decades of post-colonial violence, and inadequate policing in both regions, and the emergence of major organized crime in the latter. From Canada's perspective, the problem may become larger as arms sales directly affect maritime trade and state stability in the regions, enter or pass through our territory, or involve criminal organizations within Canada. In both areas of Asia, widespread demand for small weapons has been exacerbated by breakdown of local security and easy access. In Southeast Asia, piracy and smuggling by illicit entrepreneurs has provided much of the traffic, which has complemented the drug trade as a source of income. In the former Soviet Union, the emergence of the "Russian Mafia," combined with decreasing central control, has created vast new opportunities in the international and domestic arms bazaar.

The economic shocks of recent years combined with growing availability of small arms and the flat demand of regional armed forces for small weapons has created a potential explosive mix in East Asia. While there is evidence (but no hard figures yet) of illicit arms flows, it would be premature to state that proliferation of small arms has reached a danger point. Nevertheless, it is important that Canada closely monitor the trade and cooperate with Asian governments in controlling the arms flow, which can endanger the prosperity and stability of our major trading partners, and possibly lead to export of weapons to Canadian shores.

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PART ONE¹

Introduction to Small Arms Proliferation

I. Background

The proliferation of small arms is a complex and increasingly international issue. There are important linkages between the non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament dimensions of small arms problems, on the one hand, and firearms regulation (i.e., gun control and criminality) dimensions, on the other. The problems caused by small arms are primarily regional, sub-regional and internal (i.e., within states) in nature. As a result, while useful things may be done on a global level, a primary focus for practical solutions would appear to be in regional, sub-regional and internal action. It is important, therefore, to develop a body of relevant case studies of the impact of small arms proliferation in particular regions as a basis for policy action.

This project will examine the extent of small arms trade and proliferation in two geographical areas of East Asia — Southeast Asia and the Russian Far East. These two areas have significant possibility of experiencing small arms proliferation problems because of ethnic, cultural and political diversity, decades of post-colonial violence, and inadequate policing in both regions, and the emergence of major organized crime in the latter. The general problem of sub-state weaponry is not unique to the two regions, of course, but it is a particular aggravation to government and social order there. From Canada's perspective the problem may become larger as arms sales directly affect maritime trade and state stability in the regions, enter or pass through our territory, or involve criminal organizations within Canada.

The topic of our research is illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, as defined by the UN General Assembly. However in some cases it is hard to draw a distinct line between illicit and "legal" arms proliferation, in cases when high-rank state structures are involved in the above activity. The latter cases are also included into the scope of this research.

II. The Case of Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia saw a perverse "peace dividend" of small arms proliferation as early as 1975, with the end of the Vietnam War. An unknown quantity of weapons flowed out of Indo-China at that time into surrounding states, to guerrilla groups and pirates who plied the waters of Southeast Asia. The uneven development between major cities in the region and the more traditional rural regions, combined with the relatively weak presence of state police and military power in rural areas, and the mobility of watercraft, provided opportunities for arms traders to carry on their commerce undisturbed. Reports of rogue Chinese military trading in small arms must also be examined. Fallout from the recent "financial meltdown" in the region may also exacerbate crime growth in the near future.

¹ The work for this paper was undertaken with the support of the Verification Research Program of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone.

III. The Case of the Russian Far East

The end of the Cold War has had a direct effect on the phenomenon of small arms proliferation in Asia and elsewhere. The arms buildup in the Soviet Union was both in nuclear and conventional weapons, and with the end of Communism, the rationale for the heavy armaments declined precipitously. Moreover, the demoralization and impoverishment of Russian society and the Red Army has weakened government control over weaponry, which has become a commodity of trade in many cases. The so-called Russian Mafia, which had existed throughout the Soviet period, was lured by the illicit arms trade to facilitate the export of weapons.

IV. Implications

The widespread demand for small weapons has been exacerbated by breakdown of local security and easy access. Relatively simple technology also means that manufacture and assembly does not require advanced industrial techniques. The model of the drug trade may be applicable, and indeed, one of the findings of the research is the linkage of the drug and small arms trade through the same trafficking routes and criminal organizations (not unlike the Latin American experience). Drugs and arms share some of the following characteristics in the two regions under study:

1. Widespread demand for the product;
2. Relatively high value per unit;
3. Relative ease of transportation;
4. Relative difficulty of detection;
5. High profit margin;
6. Corrosive effects on law enforcement within states;
7. Manufacture, shipment, and distribution requires illicit networks, which further undermine law and order; and
8. Long-range harm to society in the diversion of scarce resources to non-productive ventures.

Arms and drugs both have legitimate roles in society, when controlled and used for positive ends – police and defence in the former, and medical purposes in the latter (opiates are used for pain-killing and sleep inducement). To the extent that the drug trade model is applicable to small arms proliferation, the above eight characteristics can provide entry points for reducing small arms flows, as follows:

1. Reduce supply and demand for the product;
2. Interdict transportation;
3. Improve detection capability and technology;
4. Clean up police and government corruption; and,
5. Improve enforcement capabilities, including international cooperation.

The Japanese have been successful in practically eliminating small weapons from society, and some lessons for Asia can be learned there. Unless the problem of small arms proliferation is brought under control, civil disorder and violence may become more widespread in the East Asian region. Drugs and small weapons are criminalized because they encourage and facilitate further crimes. Drugs create a dependency which can drive persons to engage in robbery and prostitution to acquire illegal substances, moving out of productive and responsible habits necessary to sustain social integrity. Guns decrease the vulnerability of criminals who undertake greater risks and anti-social actions, knowing that their weapons escalate the cost of challenging their actions.

But drugs also have major differences with small arms. Some trade in the latter is legitimate, as long as there is government sanction, while 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. Finally, the end users of weapons are usually men, and these tend to have profiles of greater criminality and aggressiveness than the average population, while drug users tend to be more passive and of both sexes.

Most importantly, the trade in small weapons is an area which lends itself best to detection and reduction in the experience of arms control and verification. The legitimate production, distribution, and deployment of large and small weapons has been the jurisdiction and central interest of the arms control community. Accounting for disposition of large as well as light weapons, for example, has been one of the activities of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) under the 1953 Military Armistice Agreement in Korea. Other arms control agreements in other areas of the world have also included small weapons in their provisions.

V. Implications for Canadian Interests

Further to the drug trade model, the damage to urban Canada is already visible. If small weapons become widespread, an additional source of civil disorder could challenge our cities, but the likelihood of unchecked small arms entering the country could reinforce criminal networks which find Canada an attractive haven. The Russian Mafia and Chinese Triads are possible candidates in this, and represent a most unsavoury vehicle for one type of globalization. Canada must understand the dimensions and impact of small arms proliferation in Asia and elsewhere in order to prevent large-scale penetration of these activities here.

In the past decade, Canada has identified East Asia as an area of major economic interest, in large part because of rapid growth in trade and immigration. CIDA has targeted the region for development assistance, and so we have growing interest in civil order. We are also dialogue partners with a growing number of countries there on a wide range of subjects. The Canadian navy has been a participant in RIMPAC and has been sending several ships every year on deployment and visits. In the past year (for several years in Japan), the East Asian “economic miracle” has halted, and extended economic problems there will undoubtedly challenge the social fabric and the capacity of governments to insure the domestic safety of their citizens. It is important for Canada to monitor the conditions of civil society, and small arms proliferation may be an excellent measure of social disorder, which correlates with other modes of social pathology including crime, drugs, and corruption.

Our trade, investment and immigration involvement in Asia is highly sensitive to conditions there. The dangers of foreign business in Russia are already legendary, and the same degree of jeopardy could occur in Asian markets with breakdown of governance and economic decline.

At the same time, Canadian growing links with the region will mean that problems there will spillover into our own society faster than before, and early warnings are crucial — rather than to wait until small arms coming from or through Asia are a domestic issue here.

Finally, there is the humanitarian issue, most recently addressed in the landmines treaty. All civilians everywhere have a human right of fundamental safety of life and property. The proliferation of small weapons can endanger that right, undermine progress to democracy, and escalate the amount of force governments must use to enforce the law.

VI. Types of Weapons

By “small arms” we refer to the list of weapons provided by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.² The list includes revolvers and pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, sub-machine guns, light and heavy machine-guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns and portable anti-aircraft missile-launchers. Proliferation of ammunition for the above list of weapons, as well as hand-grenades, portable mines and explosives is also included in the sphere of research.

² United Nations, *General and Complete Disarmament: Small Arms*, A/52/298, 27 August 1997, pp.11-12.

PART TWO

Southeast Asia

I. Scope of Research

The illicit movement of small arms and light weapons into, within and out of Southeast Asia, predominantly through illegal channels and the black market, is a dangerous phenomenon. Borrowing the definition used by the United Nations, illicit trafficking is the movement of weapons that is “contrary to the laws of States and/or international law.”³ This phenomenon is of growing concern because it has the potential to undercut government efforts at establishing stability and order. Also, its potential disruption towards legitimate commercial activities can cause serious harm to economic and social development within the region.

The illicit movement of small arms is a human security concern since it has the potential to fuel increased numbers and levels of violent crimes. This perception mainly arises from the fear that there would be a surge in criminal activities resulting from increased economic hardship, which is induced presently by the region’s financial turmoil. Violent crimes, in turn, could present a destabilizing force undermining state sovereignty.

Governments in Southeast Asia (and the rest of Asia, in general) are worried about the growing illicit trade in small arms because a number of factors have allowed it to flourish steadily:

- inadequate controls against illicit weapons production, exports and imports at the national level due to poorly trained and/or corrupt officials;
- financial and technological difficulties in implementing effective controls;
- lack of coordination and cooperation among regional states in monitoring the circulation and supply of weapons from within and outside of the region; and,
- non-existence of international or regional agreements on controlling the small arms trade (licit and illicit).

The security impact of illicit small arms movement is not confined to the region. Regional ports are becoming popular sites for transshipping weapons around the world, including destinations in the Middle East and possibly North America. Taking this argument into consideration, the small arms proliferation in Southeast Asia could have significant implications for Canada.

II. Survey of the Problem

A. *Sources of Proliferation*

The discussion in this section is based mainly on newspaper and magazine articles as well as press releases about foiled small arms movement within the region. This author relies on such information because documentation on illicit arms trade is not readily available from regional security

³ *Ibid.*, p.I.

organizations or think tanks. The illicit nature of small arms movement poses difficulties to attempts at calculating figures. To complicate matters, the task of obtaining data on legal trade in weapons (including small arms) is rather challenging because such data is often considered sensitive material by many East Asian governments. However, this author believes that the collection and analysis of a comprehensive data is conceivable with further research. This section provides an initial step towards achieving such a goal.

1. China

The People's Republic of China (PRC) may be one of the major sources of small arms proliferation in Southeast Asia. According to media reports, Chinese arms manufacturers are known to be involved in illegal production.⁴ The central government determines levels of production for each manufacturer, but many of the factories have produced quantities beyond these levels. Surplus arms are sold through illicit channels for the sake of profits.

Officials in Beijing blame this condition on the lack of centralized regulations.⁵ However, regulations alone will not solve the problem. Although China recently adopted strong laws against the illicit possession, production and transfer of small arms, such laws may only limit the growth of "cottage" production (which has been growing rapidly).⁶ The laws' ability to make an impact against the well-connected, larger state manufacturers remains doubtful. For example, two firms, Poly Technologies and China Northern Industries (Norinco), are connected to central government officials. The former is a defence conglomerate controlled by the General Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) while the latter reports to the State Council under the Prime Minister.⁷

Having entered an era of capitalism, small arms production in China is also increasingly governed by the market — the demand for such weapons within China and in neighbouring states have grown as well as the profits to be had. Current conditions in the arms manufacturing industry contribute to this trend:

- factory managers resort to illicit sales to make up for capital shortages resulting from a decline in "legal" demand for small arms;
- the lack of competitiveness, which result from outdated technology, leads to dumping of weapons; and
- corruption among officials and lack of supervision of surplus weapons result in increased thefts.⁸

Beijing attempts to manage the problem through identifying and halting proliferation at its sources, increasing border and port controls as well as launching a campaign to seize banned weapons. Nevertheless, the obstacles are daunting.⁹

2. North Korea

Weapons from North Korea have also circulated throughout the region and beyond. Some have been confiscated in Hong Kong and most of these were believed to be destined for the Middle East.¹⁰ North Korean weapons range from small arms (machine guns, rifles and grenade launchers) to high tech missile components. Specific information about arms production in the DPRK is scarce, and efforts to

⁴ "PRC: One Million Illicit Guns Said Seized Over Last 5 Years," *FBIS-CHI*, 29 May 1996, pp.25-26.

⁵ "Article Views Control of Firearms, Ammunition," *FBIS-CHI*, 1 February 1995, p.14.

⁶ "Arms Trade Thrives Despite Crackdown on Illegal Guns," *South China Morning Post*, 17 September 1996, p.10.

⁷ "Firms in Sting Have Strong Ties to Chinese Military," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 May 1996, p.A17.

⁸ "PRC: One Million Illicit Guns Said Seized over Last Five Years," *FBIS-CHI*, 29 May 1996, p.25.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ "Concern Mounts over the Territory's Smuggling Role," *South China Morning Post*, 22 September 1996, p.3.

assess small arms transfers from North Korea are difficult. North Korea has the additional incentive of needing weapons sales to earn hard currency to buy food to alleviate the ongoing famine as well as other goods.

3. Russia

Many of the small arms that have been intercepted and confiscated point to Russia as another major source of supply. Some of these weapons were left over from past conflicts in Indochina (Cambodia and Vietnam), but there are signs that new Russian small arms are also in circulation. Cambodia and Vietnam import Russian weapons for defence purposes, but there is a possibility that theft and corruption among military officials have allowed weapons to fall into non-military hands. Such conditions may be more prevalent in Cambodia, where stability has been uncertain since last year's coup.

4. Vietnam and Cambodia

Vietnam is another source of small arms in the region. Seizure of weapons from Vietnamese trawlers (some of the Vietnamese "fishermen" appear to be former military personnel¹¹) in the South China Sea raises the possibility that Vietnamese military stores are being looted by soldiers and that weapons leftover from past conflicts are making their way into neighbouring states. There is demand for small arms in Vietnam, but the country is increasingly becoming a transshipment area for weapons originating from China and Russia. The weapons enter Vietnam through its porous northern borders and move to its ports before they are loaded onto cargo ships. Russian weapons are also arriving directly at Vietnamese ports where they are further dispersed throughout the region and possibly beyond.

Cambodian weapons originate from left over caches of the war against Vietnam as well as continued Khmer Rouge insurgency which had made the country a "killing field" from the mid 1970s until early 1990s. Last year's coup, the ensuing violence and the breakdown of the UN peace-building mission may not have changed these conditions.¹² The demand for small arms has probably risen as the sense of national security diminishes and Cambodians seek personal security through the possession of firearms.

B. *Establishing Patterns of Proliferation*

Patterns of proliferation described in this section should not be assessed as hard data, and are based on analysis of media reports of intercepted small arms movement throughout the region. According to one source, in general the proliferation of small arms is "not random but highly patterned" and it can be controlled effectively through identifying likely channels of supply.¹³ Another characteristic of weapons movement through a particular channel is that such a movement often goes in both directions. For example, when illicit Chinese-made machine guns are confiscated in Vietnam, it is apparent that Vietnamese weapons could enter China through the same channel of supply. By keeping these factors in mind, our understanding of the small arms proliferation in the region would be more comprehensive.

Small arms proliferation in Southeast Asia is often linked to the drug trade. It is believed that drug cartels in Myanmar are receiving small arms from Chinese sources. This claim may be valid considering that the southwestern corner of China is known as the "Dark Channels" of illicit activities.¹⁴

¹¹ "Weapons Found in Seized Vietnamese Trawlers," *FBIS-EAS*, 19 April 1994, p.41.

¹² "Law of the Gun," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 July 1997, pp.14-17.

¹³ Aaron Karp, "Small Arms — The New Major Weapons," in Jeffrey Boutwell, Michael T. Klare and Laura W. Reed (eds.), *Lethal Commerce: The Global Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons*, Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995, p.26.

¹⁴ "Security Bureau Head Views Gun Trafficking," *FBIS-CHI*, 9 May 1995, p.40.

It is possible that Chinese weapons are traded for drugs; although information on this remains sketchy.¹⁵ Burmese drug lords have also been receiving small arms from Cambodia.¹⁶ These weapons are usually transported overland through Thailand. The Thai government has attempted to step up controls but high levels of corruption among customs and security officials has undermined such efforts.¹⁷

Chinese weapons are also making their way into Vietnam. However, it is unclear whether the weapons are intended for Vietnamese markets, or if Vietnam is only used as a transshipping site. This is important considering that Vietnam is already saturated with small arms left over from past conflicts as well as those which recently occurred in neighbouring Cambodia. Furthermore, Chinese sources claim that the Vietnamese are smuggling weapons into China¹⁸, reinforcing the “dual-direction” argument of small arms smuggling.

Small arms from Vietnam have been found on fishing trawlers off the coast of Malaysia on the South China Sea. Malaysian officials argue that these cases do not represent a serious threat because the coastal guards have only confiscated fourteen small weapons from 1990 to 1994.¹⁹ Malaysian optimism is countered by the fact that such confiscations occurred on several occasions, indicating a patterned movement. Actual interception may indicate only the tip of the iceberg.

Vietnamese small arms have also been reported circulating in the Philippines, with weapons making their way through methods similar to those in the Malaysian case above. In most cases, illicit weapons were found after the Vietnamese trawlers had been detained for illegal entry.²⁰ Manila points to rebels in the southern island of Mindanao as the most likely recipients of these weapons.²¹ One of the rebel factions, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), admits to obtaining small arms from abroad but has not identified a country source.

These patterns of small arms proliferation do not exhaust those in the region, but do indicate some of the better-known channels of supply.

C. East Asian Ports

The region’s ports play a major role in facilitating proliferation. The lack of controls on the movement of goods often allows the ports to be used as sites for transshipping small arms. Arms dealers see these ports as effective channels for dispersing their merchandise throughout the region and beyond. Hong Kong, Taiwan and many of the ports in ASEAN countries share this problem because of the following characteristics:

- the large volume of goods passing through the ports daily;
- frequent corruption and lack of professionalism among customs and security (the military, police, coast guard) officials;
- states’ reluctance to impose harsh controls for fear of losing competitiveness;
- financial and technological deficiencies which prevent the development of effective control measures; and
- lack of coordination and cooperation among the region’s customs and security officials.

In the case of Hong Kong, former British security officials have noted the problem.²² Although the demand for small arms in Hong Kong is not high, the territory is a magnet to weapons because its docks are used for licit and illicit transshipment. Hong Kong is strategically located at the crossroads of

¹⁵ “Burma, Red China Involved in Drugs-for-Arms Deal,” *Central News Agency*, 9 April 1992.

¹⁶ “Thais Foil Missiles-for-Heroin Deal,” *U.P.I.*, 7 June 1995.

¹⁷ Karp, Aaron. “The Rise of Black and Gray Markets,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Number 535, September 1994, pp.175-189.

¹⁸ “Gunrunning Cases Resolved in Border Areas,” *FBIS-CHI*, 1 December 1995, p.36.

¹⁹ “Weapons Found in Seized Vietnamese Trawlers.”

²⁰ “PRC Fishermen Charged with Firearms Possession,” *FBIS-EAS*, 12 April 1995, p.58.

²¹ “Senator Alleges Smuggled Arms Come from Vietnam,” *FBIS-EAS*, 11 January 1995, p.66.

²² “Concern Mounts over the Territory’s Smuggling Role,” p.3.

Northeast and Southeast Asia as well as being the region's gateway to Europe, North America and the Middle East. Although officials claim that Hong Kong's shipping controls are very effective, the port's high volume of traffic is enough reason for arms dealers to take the risk.²³ A tight security net around Hong Kong is neither viable nor seen as desirable because it would severely restrict legitimate trade.

The weapons that are transshipped here not only originate from mainland China but also from neighbouring countries such as North Korea. In 1995, a third of the Chinese weapons confiscated originated from PLA sources and have ranged from small arms to high-tech missile components.²⁴ The situation is worsening because China's harsh internal crackdown on illicit small arms trade has resulted in a surge of weapons movement from the rest of the country to the southern provinces and into Hong Kong. In Guangdong and other areas around Hong Kong violent criminal activities have been on the rise in the last two years.²⁵

In addition to Hong Kong, small arms are making their way to Taiwan. Suspected weapons-carrying ships from mainland China have been reported unloading cargoes at several ports on the island.²⁶ It is still not clear whether Taiwan is the final destination of these weapons or if it simply serves as a transshipping site or both. There have been examples of Taiwan serving as a transit point: the 2,000 AK-47 machine guns that were confiscated in San Francisco about two years ago had been transported by Chinese and Taiwanese citizens.²⁷ The demand for small arms in Taiwan is high among criminal elements and a report in 1996 also suspects that the Chinese government may be supplying pro-integration groups on the island.²⁸ In addition to the discovery of Chinese weapons, the Taiwanese security apparatus has also found caches of small arms that originate from Sabah, Malaysia.²⁹ The existence of weapons supplier other than just the Chinese supports the view that Taiwan is a possible hub in a network of illicit small arms trade in the region.

Ports in Southeast Asian countries have been identified as having some of the least effective anti-smuggling controls in the world (especially against drugs and small arms).³⁰ The United States has pressured members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to increase control mechanisms at their ports. However, the ASEAN countries have not been responsive. As in the situation in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the lack of effective anti-smuggling controls is a result of the factors described earlier in this section. Most of the ASEAN states, especially Singapore, argue that increased controls would seriously hamper legitimate trade and make their ports unattractive to shipping companies.³¹

III. The Impact of Illicit Small Arms on Human Security

A. *Terrorism and Insurgency*

The number of insurgency movements in Southeast Asia receiving frequent supplies of small arms is limited. These movements exist in Indonesia, Myanmar and the Philippines. As well, there is continued fighting among different political factions in Cambodia.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ "Impact of Mainland Crackdown on Guns Viewed," *FBIS-CHI*, 29 November 1995, p 105.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ "Taiwan: Police Seize 'Batch' of Mainland Weapons from Fishing Boats," *FBIS-CHI*, 20 February 1996, p.71.

²⁷ "Firms in Sting Have Strong Ties to the Chinese Military," p.A17.

²⁸ "Taiwan: Police Seize 'Batch' of Mainland Weapons from Fishing Boats," p.71.

²⁹ "Malaysian Arms Proprietor Arrested in Sabah," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 17 April 1996.

³⁰ "US Backs Off Bid for More Controls on ASEAN Ports," *Asia Times*, 24 September 1996, p.1.

³¹ *Ibid.*

The insurgents in **Indonesia** (Acehnese, East Timorese and West Irian) are among the least likely to receive small arms from abroad. Their numbers are small and they do not have the mechanisms to raise adequate funds for weapons purchase. The Indonesian government and military have been effective in isolating these movements and preventing any contact with the outside. The East Timorese resistance, for example, mainly uses weapons taken from Indonesian soldiers. Therefore, although the demand for small arms may exist in these insurgent areas, the threat of actual acquisition is minimal. This argument is strong especially considering that profits have become the main goal of today's small arms trade. The most likely recipients of small arms in Indonesia are criminal elements. And even this situation is questionable because there is not a network of organized crime, such as the Triad in China or the drug cartels in Myanmar, that have the resources to sustain any form of arms transfer.³²

In the **Philippines**, separatist groups on Mindanao have engaged in sporadic armed confrontation with central government forces for years. The insurgents have admitted to obtaining weapons from foreign sources.³³ Photographs of rebel soldiers show them to be well equipped with small arms and ammunition, and it is unlikely that these are solely from stealing and confiscating weapons from government forces. Further fighting not only threatens human security in the Philippines, but also could have a significant impact on the country's economic growth.

Since last year's coup in **Cambodia**, incidents of political violence have been high. "Hundreds of [Hun Sen's] oppositions remain in Thailand in exile or are fighting in the jungles."³⁴ Although Hun Sen's faction has been accused internationally for committing such violence against Norodom Ranarindh's supporters, the latter often are perpetrators as well. Prior to the coup, during the United Nations sponsored peacebuilding process, it was feared that disarmament efforts would result in small arms moving out of the country and into neighbouring states. However, while the movement of small arms from Cambodia to places such as northern Myanmar is possible, the demand for weapons in Cambodia is rising. Small arms are probably re-circulating within the country and foreign sources may be involved in further re-supply. While Hun Sen's faction could be receiving small arms shipment from Vietnam, Ranarindh loyalists could be receiving theirs from China.³⁵ To make things even more complicated, the Khmer Rouge is still actively seeking ways to become involved in this political power play.

B. Criminal Activities

Criminal elements have profited most from easier access to illicit weapons, and there are signs of increasing gun related violence. In **China**, there is a steady growth in gun-related crimes since 1994 and the government warns of the threat this poses to public security. The problem is intensified by the growing brutality of such crimes.³⁶ As numbers and levels of criminal violence escalate, citizens seek security through acquiring small arms for personal use. In turn, this trend exacerbates overall conditions as it allows the small arms trade to flourish by raising the demand for such weapons. This becomes the case especially when the government is perceived to be slow and ineffective in implementing measures to manage the problem. Such a situation is not unique to China and can be observed throughout East Asia.

The links between small arms proliferation and criminal activities in Southeast Asia is especially problematic when one also factors in the estimated high volume of drug trade in the region. In **Myanmar**, the sales of small arms to drug lords such as Khun Sa have allowed them to strengthen their

³² A group called Pemuda Pancasila is known to be involved in criminal activities such as petty thefts, robberies, kidnappings, gambling and prostitution. But the scope of their organization as well as their potential to disrupt state stability is limited. If anything, members of this group have often been used by the military to intimidate anti-government elements.

³³ "Senator Alleges Smuggled Arms Come from Vietnam," p.66.

³⁴ "Sticking to His Guns," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 January 1998.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "Arms Trade Thrives Despite Crackdown on Illegal Guns," *South China Morning Post*, 17 September 1996, p.10.

power.³⁷ With easy access to such weapons, the drug cartels have formed well-equipped private armies, which increasingly pose serious threats to state sovereignty.³⁸ The state monopoly on violence — one of the main characteristics of the modern state system — is increasingly undermined. Through the flourishing illicit trade in small arms, these private armies occasionally appear at least as well equipped and trained than the national security forces. This situation provides drug cartels with the tools to strengthen their grip over communities of peasants who are enslaved by the trade.³⁹

Small arms proliferation is also associated with the drug trade in the form of common channels of supply. The transfer of small arms may be different from that of drugs because the former carry more bulk and are easier to trace in their origins.⁴⁰ However, the manner in which they are transported is comparable. For example, drugs and small arms transfers across the Thai-Cambodian border are sometimes carried out by concealing these products inside the gas tanks of shipping trucks.⁴¹ In addition to the similarities in methods, these goods are moving through similar patterns of supply channels. This argument is supported by reports claiming that weapons and drugs are often exchanged along such supply lines.⁴² The trades in small arms and drugs complement each other; the flourishing of one trade certainly induces growth in the other.

While the small arms/drug trades model also applies to illicit maritime activities, piracy is the more serious problem at sea. The most recent International Maritime Bureau (IMB) report shows that Southeast Asia remains the region with the highest rate of piracy in the world.⁴³ These criminal activities are frequent in the South China Sea (especially within the Hong Kong-Luzon-Hainan triangle), the Strait of Malacca and the Gulf of Thailand. While trends have been on the rise for the last five years or so, last year's report indicates another problem; the level of violence committed during pirate attacks have dramatically increased.

Acts of piracy in the region are usually carried out using homemade explosives and small arms such as rifles and machine guns. The increasing level of violence during pirate attacks could possibly be linked to the growing availability of small arms. Considering that the number of pirate attacks reported did not increase dramatically, the surge in levels of violence which accompany these acts can only be explained by the widening use of small arms. Consequently, in addition to facing the fear of being robbed, the personal security of ship crews is also increasingly threatened.

C. Implications for State Sovereignty in the Region

The situations discussed in the previous section indicate that the most predominant threats to security caused by the growth in illicit small arms trafficking are of non-military nature. Insurgency movements, factional fighting and criminal activities flourish with easy access to small arms. While regional states may not see these threats as serious in the short term, their implications in the long run may cause disruption in state legitimacy and stability.

One of the most important features of the modern state is its monopoly on internal violence.⁴⁴ However, as non-state, non-military elements gain power, they pose a challenge to the norm. Having just

³⁷ It is important to point out that even though Khun Sa has surrendered to the Burmese authorities, he continues to enjoy a life of luxury. Another drug lord, Wei Siao Gang, has moved in to take over Khun Sa's abandoned factories and routes. Wei also has commands a well-equipped private army. The drug business in Myanmar goes on. "Guerilla Take Over Golden Triangle Drug Trade," *Reuters World Service*, 3 April 1997.

³⁸ "Opium 'Golden Triangle' Boosts Southeast Asia's Economy," *Inter Press Service*, 20 February 1991.

³⁹ At the height of his power, Khun Sa controlled more than 12,000 people in one of his headquarter towns, Ho Mong. "Guerillas Take Over Golden Triangle Drug Trade."

⁴⁰ Karp, "Small Arms — The New Major Weapons," p.26.

⁴¹ "Thais Foil Missiles-for-Heroin Deal."

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Piracy and Armed Robberies at Sea: Annual Report, 1st January – 31December 1997*, Essex: IMC International Maritime Bureau, 1998.

gained their independence from European powers in the latter part of the century (except for Thailand, which was never ruled by a foreign power) countries in Southeast Asia are still undergoing statebuilding processes. Most of them are still concentrating on developing mechanisms against encroachment from other countries (especially considering the existence of historical animosities and unending territorial disputes among the regional countries). As a result, small-scale insurgencies and criminal activities are often overlooked as possible threats to the state.

The growth of drug smuggling and piracy poses threats to the region's economic activities. As the current economic downturn deepens, there is a strong possibility that these activities may grow even faster. For example, the tough anti-drug policies in Thailand, which has been responsible for the declining production of opium on the Thai section of the Golden Triangle, could lose its effectiveness as officials try to relieve their economic hardship through corruption. Also, the hundreds of Indonesians who are fleeing to the Malaysian peninsula could become easy targets for pirates operating in the Malacca Strait. These descriptions are mainly speculative, but they are important considerations for governments in the region. The current economic meltdown represents a tough challenge to statehood in Southeast Asia. The erosion of state legitimacy by internal, non-military, non-state elements renders the task of overcoming the meltdown more difficult. Therefore, it is in these countries interest to attribute more attention to the trafficking of illicit small arms, which enhances the power of these non-state actors.

D. *Implications for Canada*

The problem of illicit small arms movement in Southeast Asia could also have repercussions that extend beyond the region's border. Having close relations with most of the countries in the region, there are a number of implications that Canada may suffer if the illicit proliferation of small arms is allowed to grow in Southeast Asia and the rest of Asia in general. These implications can be divided into those that are of a direct nature and those that could affect Canada indirectly.

There has not been any substantial evidence yet that Asian small arms are circulating illicitly on Canadian soil.⁴⁵ However, the possibility of this happening is real. The demand for military small arms may not be high, but criminal elements in Canada — as in any country — certainly have some interest in such weapons. Recognizing the *potential* for problem, instead of reacting to it “*after the fact,*” is important considering efforts to extract small arms from society has been proven to be difficult.⁴⁶

As Canada becomes more involved in the Asian economies, the volume of transshipment entering the Port of Vancouver is rapidly growing. This expansion could potentially stretch the abilities of Canadian customs officials to monitor the entrance of goods. The experience in Hong Kong indicates that as the volume of transshipment increases, so does the susceptibility of ports to illicit activities.⁴⁷ The most recent drug bust at the Vancouver port indicates that criminals are already taking advantage of increased transshipment volume to smuggle illicit goods. Since the channels for drug smuggling are often used for illicit weapons transfer as well, attention should be paid to the possibility of small arms entering Canada through Vancouver and efforts should be taken to avoid this.

In addition to direct shipments of small arms from Asia, Canada should also be on alert for Asian weapons that may have been introduced to North America through U.S. ports. The confiscation of Chinese machine guns at the San Francisco port two years ago indicates the possible existence of a supply channel.⁴⁸ Once the weapons have reached North America, they could enter Canada by land in spite of

⁴⁵ A study conducted in Quebec (“Project Canon”) guesstimates that about two-thirds of firearms confiscated in Canada originate from the United States while most of the remainder came from Europe. *The Illegal Movement of Firearms in Canada*, Report of the Firearms Smuggling Work Group, Ottawa: Canada Department of Justice, 1995, p.8.

⁴⁶ Christopher Smith, “The International Trade in Small Arms,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, September 1995, p.430.

⁴⁷ “HK’s Port, Location Drawing in Illegal Arms Smuggler,” *Hong Kong Standard*, 17 September 1996.

⁴⁸ “Chinese Gun Dealer is Global, Diversified Giant,” *Los Angeles Times*, Part D, p.1.

controls along the borders. The Firearms Smuggling Work Group claims that small arms are smuggled into north of the border through means as simple as courier services.⁴⁹ Also, gun running from the United States seems to be in association with other types of smuggling such as tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

The indirect implications of small arms proliferation to Canada mainly stem from our economic relations with countries of the Asia-Pacific. In 1993, the region was the market for more than \$16.6 billion of Canadian exports while imports from the region numbered about \$25.1 billion.⁵⁰ While Canadian investment in the Asia-Pacific region figured at about \$12.2 billion in 1996.⁵¹ Furthermore, Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are among the top 25 most promising markets for Canadian export.⁵² The indirect implications of Southeast Asia's growing illicit arms trade can be observed in at least three ways.

First, small arms proliferation has the potential to undermine government legitimacy. As mentioned, the proliferation of small arms has strong destabilizing elements. However, increasing crime and insurgency, fueled by the availability of small arms, is not likely to cause immediate chaos. Instead, the process of undermining government legitimacy will be gradual and in turn, this regression will certainly affect susceptible countries' economic performance. Such a condition would be disadvantageous because Canadian trade and investment interests in the region are high.

Second, the rising trend of piracy could present serious obstructions to regular economic activities. The waterways of the region are highly trafficked by ships connecting the region with the rest of the world. The East Asian sea-lanes of communication (SLOC) are the lifelines to the region's economies as well as a major channel for Canadian export and imports. The rising violence related to pirate attacks would hamper the movement of shipping vessels and increase the cost of conducting trade (e.g., higher insurance cost, extra costs for re-routing).⁵³ Although the negative effects may not be apparent now, their long-term repercussions are reasons enough to become involved in preventative measures such as limiting the flow of illicit small arms in the region.

Third, Canada's involvement in humanitarian and development projects in the region is at risk of being undermined by violence caused by the growth in illicit small arms trafficking. For example, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is funding the six-year, \$7.8 million Canada-Cambodia Development Program (CCDP), to aid the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation in this war torn country.⁵⁴ This is one of the largest and most active development assistance projects in Cambodia. However, the success of this project could be eroded if political instability and armed violence continue. CIDA and many Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are also involved in similar development assistance programs in Vietnam and Thailand.⁵⁵ In these cases as well, violence caused by easy access to small arms is certainly a factor which limits the accomplishment of these organizations in promoting prosperity, security and Canadian values in the region.

⁴⁹ *The Illegal Movement of Firearms in Canada*, p.8.

⁵⁰ "Canadian Trade Facts: Asia-Pacific," Internet site: www.infoexport.gc.ca/viewdocument-e.asp?name=asiap&country=0&continent=Asia.

⁵¹ *Canada Asia Review 1998*, Vancouver: Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, 1998, Appendix.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Eric Ellen, "Bringing Piracy to Account," *Jane's Navy International*, Vol.102, No.3, April 1997, p.29.

⁵⁴ Canadian International Development Agency, "Rekindling Cooperation and Trust in Cambodia (Story from the Field)," Internet site: w3.acd-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/852563bf00633ad7852563bc00485177/0bc691419efe4f0f8525649f0067f7f7?OpenDocument.

⁵⁵ Canadian International Development Agency, "Strategies, Priorities and Eligible Countries: Asia," Internet site: w3.acd-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/852563bf00633ad9852563bc005520eu?OpenView.

IV. Policy Options

A. *UN Based Efforts*

The United Nations remains one of the best institutions for promoting efforts to manage the problem of small arms proliferation. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali's Agenda for Peace was important as a beginning, and last year's Report of the Small Arms Panel provided some guidelines to further treatment of the issue. The greatest advantage to UN based efforts is its inclusiveness, especially when considering that illicit small arms proliferation is a global security problem as much as it is a regional or national one.

One of the most talked about suggestions is the possible expansion of the UN Register of Conventional Weapons to promote transparency about the legal trade in small arms. However, since its creation, the UN Register has had mixed results.⁵⁶ Not all states have submitted reports of their weapons acquisitions, but the leading arms exporting countries have responded. The export/import information provided by states often contain discrepancies, but it has revealed some previously unknown data as well as represents a modest step towards enhancing transparency. The expansion of the Register (beyond the seven original weapon categories and to include small arms) seems an efficient and logical progression, however the goal will be difficult to achieve. The creation of the Register in the first place was a difficult enough process and some states are unhappy about its current scope and coverage (hence, the lack of universal participation). For a number of states, the current situation represents the limit of their willingness to cooperate in transparency measures. Although the expansion of the Register may be the most desired goal for countries such as Canada, its actual realization is difficult. Nevertheless, this should not deter attempts to proceed with such an approach.

The UN, through its Centre for International Crime and Prevention, has also increased its activity in the study of domestic firearm regulations. Concerns related to the illicit trafficking of small arms figure prominently in this study. At the moment, there may be a move towards developing a convention dealing with illicit trafficking within the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. With further development — including more participation among member states — these efforts represent an important step towards a more comprehensive treatment of the illicit small arms trade. The UN's work in this field allows for a multi-dimensional approach (when combined with UN studies on post-conflict disarmament, arms control, norm building and education) to tackling problems related to the small arms phenomenon.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the UN is heavily involved in developing effective ways to manage post-conflict disarmament.⁵⁷ The provision of disarmament goals in peacekeeping missions is important because they are essential to the creation of lasting peace and stability. This is usually done through the process of norm building as well as educating the people living in post-conflict areas. The UN Disarmament Committee has conducted a series of studies on the role of UN peacekeeping missions in disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating post-conflict societies.⁵⁸ These efforts do not necessarily address directly how the movement of small arms affects trends in criminal activities (considering such activities are more predominant in Southeast Asia). However, they provide insights on how small arms originating from countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam can be stemmed.

⁵⁶ This discussion is based mainly on Edward J. Laurance, Siemon T. Wezeman and Herbert Wulf, *Arms Watch: SIPRI Report on the First Year of the UN Register of Conventional Arms*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

⁵⁷ For an in depth analysis of this subject please see *Practical Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Measures for Peacebuilding*, Ottawa: Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1997.

⁵⁸ The examination which is most relevant to this study is: UNIDIR Project on Disarmament and Conflict Resolution, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes*, Vol.96, No.19, 1996.

B. Regional Based Efforts

In order to complement the achievements of the UN, the Panel on Small Arms also suggested in its report the development of regional initiatives. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has emerged as a forum for discussions on security, although it is not a formal regional security structure. With the lack of a structured regional security mechanism, the ARF has become an important body for the promotion of policies aimed at managing the illicit trade in small arms. For example, one of the confidence building measures (CBMs) listed for discussion within the ARF and its sub-bodies is “preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional small arms.” By introducing ideas in the ARF and working within this framework of thinking, regional efforts would most likely be debated and pursued in a more productive fashion.

One of the initiatives could be the creation of regional small arms registers. To ensure efficient exchanges of ideas, policies and information, registers from different regions would be interconnected through a forum within the UN body. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia has indicated a desire to initiate the development of such a register for the purposes of tackling the illicit trade in small arms as well as enhancing regional confidence-building.⁵⁹ Since Malaysia is one of the core members of the ARF, there is a possibility that it may decide to introduce such an initiative through this forum.

Another idea that seems feasible is the creation of a regional convention against the illicit trafficking of small arms, as we have seen occur in the Organization of American States (OAS). There appears to be common features between small arms proliferation in the Americas and Southeast Asia. These include:

- criminal uses of illicit small arms;
- close relations between the small arms and drug trades (e.g., the cases of Myanmar and Colombia);
- possible proliferation of small arms as a result of post-conflict conditions (e.g., the cases of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Cambodia);
- organized insurgent and separatist movements (e.g., the Shining Path in Peru and Bolivia, the Zapatistas in Mexico and the MNL/MILF in the Philippines; and,
- existence of relatively stable governments.

These similarities suggest that important lessons can be learned from the OAS experience. In the OAS Convention, there are a number of elements which deserve to be highlighted because of their potential applicability to conditions in Southeast Asia and possibly the rest of East Asia.⁶⁰ These include:

- marking of small arms during production to enable increased facility in tracing the origins and movement of weapons;
- strengthening export controls by identifying destination of small arms transfers;
- enhancing cooperation, coordination and exchange of information and monitoring technologies among regional states; and,
- establishing of national bodies that would serve as contact points among the regional states.

The development of a regional convention on the illicit trafficking of small arms would certainly complement similar efforts at the UN level.

Regional countries that face difficulties controlling the inflow of illicit small arms may be interested in pursuing the above suggestions. Thailand, for example, has indicated in the past that it is

⁵⁹ Laurance, Wezeman and Wulf, *Arms Watch: SIPRI Report on the First Year of the UN Register of Conventional Arms*, pp.56-57.

⁶⁰ Organization of American States, *Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials*, AG/RES. 1 (XXIV – E/97), 13 November 1997.

willing to accept suggestions on how to manage trans-border criminal activities.⁶¹ Importantly, such a convention addresses the problems related to illicit proliferation but does not interfere with legal government-to-government trade in small arms. The ARF might act as a forum for initial discussions on the topic, after which regular multi-lateral discussions would be set up to ensure that focused deliberations evolve.

V. Suggested Further Research

A. *The Development of a Small Arms Database*

There is no comprehensive database of small arms acquisitions and inventories available that is comparable to the one on large conventional weapons maintained by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). An attempt to develop such a database would be challenging but not impossible. Some countries in Asia are still hesitant about the confidence-building values of transparency and consider such an act disadvantageous because it supposedly would expose their military weaknesses. However, this view may be changing as precedents, such as declaring weapon acquisitions to the UN Register, instills trust and confidence in military transparency. If the legal trade in small arms becomes more transparent, the task of developing a comprehensive database would become less challenging. In turn, the development of such a database would allow better assessments of policies implemented to counter the illicit proliferation of small arms.

B. *Further Exploration of the ARF Option*

ARF considerations might consist of giving more attention to developing a regional convention against the illicit trafficking of small arms (described earlier), as well as researching the possibility of establishing a regional small arms register. Although a small arms register is often seen as an arms control mechanism, it is also an effective way to approach concerns related to illicit trafficking. Some Southeast Asian countries may react coolly to such a proposal because they may perceive it as a “foreign/western” construct. However, the development of an arms register appears to suit the countries’ preference for confidence-building measures (CBMs) as well as consensus building and non-confrontational approaches to security relations. The ARF itself would not be responsible for creating and running the register. Instead, it would act as forum in which the topic can be deliberated.

Although the ARF meets only once a year, members have observed the value of this forum and therefore, have created several inter-sessional meetings to deal with specific security topics. The forming of an ARF inter-sessional group to address illicit small arms trafficking will indeed enhance regional cooperation. The trans-border nature of illicit movement of small arms has rendered the issue a regional problem. Thus, cooperation through frequent dialogues and workshops would bring the region closer to understanding the small arms phenomenon comprehensively.

The ARF is important in that it is the only forum in which Southeast Asian countries as well as major regional players are able to gather and discuss security issues. In short, getting the countries to sit and talk about the feasibility of a small arms register (its pros and cons) or other actions to address the small arms problem is the most important step of the process.

Since its creation, ASEAN countries have dominated the ARF agenda. Therefore, in order to allow the small arms concern to be included in the agenda of the forum, at least one of the ASEAN members will have to recognize the importance of addressing the issue. It is in Canada’s interest that small arms proliferation be discussed within the forum, given the issue’s implications for North America.

⁶¹ “Thailand Seeks Help to Stem Drug Flow from ‘Golden Triangle,’” *The Reuters Library Report*, 20 February 1990.

Canada is in a strategic position to suggest some of the paths that could be followed to address the problem adequately. However, Canada must not do so in a patronizing way. As Canadian diplomats already know, Southeast Asian officials are sensitive about incorporating “foreign” ideas into regional policies. Nonetheless, small arms proliferation is too important of an issue for Canada to be left out of the ARF discussions. The creation of a regional small arms register seems feasible as long as Canada introduces the idea to the forum with previous support from the ASEAN members. Only then will the discussion be taken more seriously (once they realize the seriousness of the problem). The manner in which such an idea is packaged matters a great deal.

VI. Concluding Remarks

Past studies on small arms proliferation and its impacts on societies have indicated Central-South America, Central-Southern Africa and South Asia as the most problematic areas. However, this study indicates that the problem is also affecting Southeast Asia. The illicit trafficking of small arms in the region has a security character that is distinct from that in some of the other regions (except for Central-South America, where there are similar features). The implications of illicit trade in such weapons are linked closer to criminal activities than they are related to issues of post-conflict peacebuilding. The exception to this may be Cambodia. But even there the impact of small arms proliferation has not led to the chaos seen in parts of South Asia and Southern Africa. Nonetheless, security conditions in Southeast Asia are of considerable concern to Canada because of its possible implications.

Countries in the region have taken some steps to control the illicit movement of small arms at the national level through methods such as imposing strict laws, increasing border surveillance and training officials.⁶² Bilateral approaches such as joint maritime patrols have also taken place among Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.⁶³ However, as the study indicates, overcoming the problem effectively would require more cooperation and coordination among the countries in the region. Acting as a neutral third party (yet having great interest in the situation within the region), Canada may be in a position to help catalyze such cooperation. There may be a lack of interest among some of the Southeast Asian countries because of their inability to project a long-term view of non-military/human security in the region. Canada could play a role in raising awareness of the concerns related to illicit trafficking of small arms and small arms proliferation in general. In any case, it is not in Canada’s best interest to remain idle and wait for the regional countries to come to their senses.

This study shows that a number of approaches can be pursued to achieve regional cooperation in tackling the small arms problem. As reports demonstrate a trend of increasing illicit small arms transfers, countries cannot afford to wait longer in reacting if the problem is to be managed effectively. The conditions will not improve by themselves. This is important to bear in mind, especially considering that small arms are harder to retrieve once they have entered a society.

⁶² “Seri Supports Death for Illegal Arms”, *Bangkok Post*, 1 July 1990, p. 2.

⁶³ Russ Swinnerton, “Piracy in East Asia: Trends and Countermeasures”, paper presented at the “Eleventh Asia Pacific Roundtable” in Kuala Lumpur, 5-8 June 1998.

PART THREE

The Russian Far East, Eastern Siberia

I. Scope of the Research

In this section, the problem of small arms proliferation will be examined in the region of East Siberia and the Russian Far East, including the Russian-Chinese and Russian-Korean frontiers. This area includes:

- Russian Federation: Irkutsk, Chita, Amur, Magadan, Kamchatka and Sakhalin provinces (oblasts); Krasnoyarsk, Amur and Maritim (Primorskij) territories (krais); Ethnic republics of Sakha-Yakutia and Buryatia.
- China Provinces: Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Hebei, Beijing and Tjanjin; “Autonomous Regions”; Inner Mongolia (Nei Menggu)
- North Korea (Chongjin-Najin border area)

However, detailed coverage of political and financial aspects of the problem require some reference to the Moscow area, because major movements of small arms at the Russian-Chinese and Russian-Korean Frontiers hardly occur without decisions of major military, political, business and criminal centers of Russia, most of them in Moscow city/Moscow province area. The Tula province and Urals area of Russia (especially the two provinces of Chelyabinsk and Yekaterinburg) are also mentioned in the research as major centers of arms production of Russia.

The Russian Far East, Siberia and Russian-Chinese/ Russian-Korean Frontier should be regarded as an area of special concern. Small arms are proliferating there because of the weakened national systems of control on small arms production, exports and imports, particularly at extreme distances. Of major concern among neighbours is that the illicit/semi-illicit proliferation of small arms in the region may be exacerbating crime. At the same time, criminal organizations are also interested in involvement in the small arms trade.

II. Sources of Small Arms

Russia, China and North Korea are the countries reported to be sources of small arms proliferation in the region. In the post-Communist era, there is practically no official control over small arms production and trade. The strict ban on the owning and trade of small arms that existed before 1991 has been lifted.⁶⁴ But even during the last decade of the Communist rule, the law banning small arms ownership was not fully enforced for all social groups. Obtaining a license to own and carry small weapons was no longer a complicated process after 1992. Now, many Russian companies and organizations have their own arsenals of small weapons without any license. Millions of private citizens

⁶⁴ The ban on the owning of small arms became officially less strict than it was before 1991. At the same time, lack of enforcement became a typical element of Russian lifestyle at the end of the 1980s.

of the Russian Federation are also purchasing firearms in order to protect themselves and their families from the social chaos of crime expansion in contemporary Russia.⁶⁵

A. *Small Arms and the Russian Defence Industry*

East Siberia and the Russian Far East have been traditionally reported as areas of increased concentration of unlicensed firearms among private citizens. Since the end of the 1970s most of the families and individuals residing in the underpopulated northern sector of the area (approximately to the north of the line Krasnoyarsk-Irkutsk-Khabarovsk-Ol'ga) owned from one to several rifles, revolvers, pistols or even automatic rifles. Even the Communist authorities tended to tolerate that situation keeping in mind the isolation of rural communities and individual settlements, the vital necessity of hunting and self-defence (including self-defence from wild animals), and finally restricted capability of law enforcement structures to control sparse population scattered across the vast mountainous and forested territory.⁶⁶

The Russian state military industry has been in crisis since the end of the Cold War. Budget cuts, in combination with gradual reduction of federal military forces, led to the degradation of its traditional internal constituency. Trying to improve their financial situation, many state enterprises are looking for new markets to sell their production. Current legal regulations make the legal, large-scale sales of Russian-made firearms to Russian consumers a difficult task, so the military industry looks to the development of small arms exports. In East Asia, Russian military industry still remains a traditional supplier of the armed forces of China, Vietnam and Cambodia. China mainly concentrates on purchasing heavy weapons, aircraft and submarines. Nevertheless, small amounts of Russian small arms are regularly purchased by China. During the last two years Russian arms dealers have been repeatedly visiting other countries of the region (among them Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand) trying to explore and develop new markets.⁶⁷

The state military industry in Russia is backed by government and parliamentary circles, making it easy for the industry to boost small arms exports to traditional partners, as well as to search for new markets. Widespread corruption and corporate protectionism in modern Russian society make it difficult to draw a distinct line between legal and illegal export of arms produced by Russian military industry (in spite of the government declarations about its "strict adherence to norms of international law"). It is also worth mentioning that human rights violations in such countries of Asia such as the PRC or Vietnam never influence the delivery of Russian arms to those countries.

All arms trading in Russia is formally controlled by the federal arms export agency, or "Rosvooruzhenije" (from the Russian: Rus[sian]/ Arms). The head of Rosvooruzhenije is Yevgenij Anan'ev. The second main figure is Rear Admiral Oleg Belavintsev who serves as its deputy general director. Since December 1997, one of Anan'ev's chief advisors has been former Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, who is reportedly involved in corruption scandals. (Grachev and Belavintsev are reported to be close personal friends.)⁶⁸

B. *Reorganization of the Defence Industry*

In February 1998, a new government commission for the financial recovery of the defence industry was formed in Moscow. On 23 February, in accordance with the resolution signed by Prime

⁶⁵ Both private companies and citizens are purchasing different types of firearms but prefer military style.

⁶⁶ Siberians often prefer to have good hunting or sporting rifles for hunting, but at the same time do not mind having military style pistols in their pockets. (The "Makarov" pistol, for example, is not effective in combat action but may prove effective if the owner meets a bear in wilderness).

⁶⁷ C. Bickers, "Bear Market: Russia Wants to be the Top Arms Supplier to Asia," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 September 1997, p.25.

⁶⁸ *RF Daily News Release*, 18 December 1997.

Minister Chernomyrdin, First Deputy Prime Minister Anatolij Chubais was appointed as its chairman with Deputy Prime Minister and Economics Minister Yakov Urinson appointed as deputy chairman.⁶⁹ Chubais announced on 20 February that the government was aiming at revision of its procedure for concluding contracts with defence enterprises, as well as at reduction of the number of such enterprises receiving state orders from 1,700 to 600.

Several powerful Russian opposition leaders, holding a majority in Russian Parliament (among them Vladimir Zhirinovski), have declared the arms trade one of Russia's economic goals.⁷⁰ They strongly believe, and try to convince the Russian public, that the arms trade is a good and reliable business which should be developed to bring cash to the country, as well as to keep military industry jobs.

A number of former state enterprises in Russia specializing in small arms production (exact data not available) have sold some of their shares to private structures and citizens. As a result of this, many of them fell into the sphere of the activity of "Russian Mafia" and became sources of totally uncontrolled production and trade of small arms both for Russian and foreign markets.

C. *The Russian Mafia*

Well organized criminal groups started forming in Russia (USSR) at the end of the Civil War (1918-1922). After more than fifty years of evolution and transformation, they have managed to preserve their viability and coordination, have accumulated significant funds and have found ways to integrate themselves with the power structures of the Soviet Empire including high-ranking officials of the Communist Party of the USSR and the KGB. The processes of disintegration of the Soviet State during the period of "Perestrojka" and "Glasnost" (1986-1991) further reinforced the above-mentioned alliance between "professional mobsters" and a part of communist "Nomenclatura," thus creating a special form of organized crime which is often called "Russian Mafia." Modern structures of "Russian Mafia" operating in the sphere of arms production and sales are represented by several powerful groups consisting of criminal syndicates (sometimes called "brotherhoods") working in close cooperation with certain industrial, financial and political groups, recruiting agents in law enforcement structures and involving foreign companies and individual citizens in their network (see Appendix). Severe discipline, conspiracy, excellent equipment, well developed "intelligence" and "counter-intelligence" and relatively professional approach towards marketing and business — all make modern criminal groups of Russia strong and dangerous, as well as, to a greater or lesser extent, unknown and invisible to Western countries (including Canadian and American observers).

Organized criminal "syndicates" and "brotherhoods" of the Russian Federation with their headquarters in the cities of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Chelyabinsk, Khabarovsk and Vladivostok (the latter two in the Russian Far East), were reported to be involved in small arms exports to other countries of East Asia.⁷¹

By "involvement" is meant various degrees of control over the above sphere of business mainly resulting in accumulating considerable commissions from international arms deals.

Smaller criminal groups operating between East Siberia and the Urals tend to control the trafficking of small arms through the provinces of Tyumen, Omsk, and Kemerovo, and through Krasnoyarsk territory, in order to obtain small commissions from the deals. The local transport police (GAI) is often involved in controlling small arms trafficking for the benefit of criminal groups.

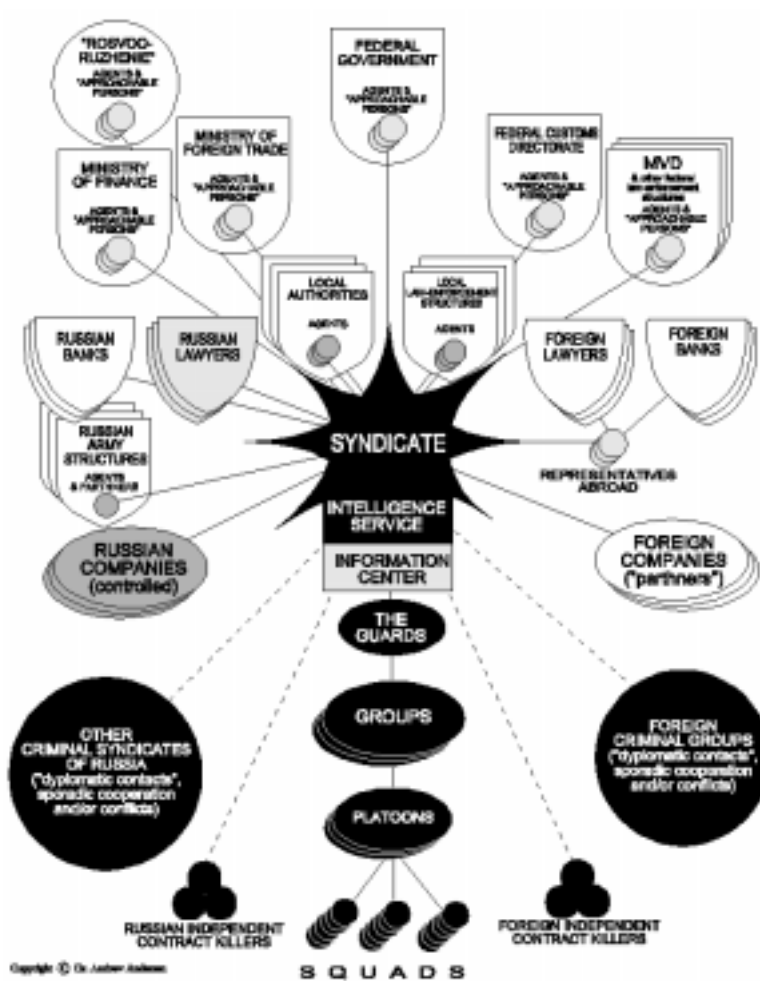
⁶⁹ Please note: at the end of March 1998, President Yeltsin fired the entire Cabinet. Both Chubais and Urinson lost their positions in Federal Government and they will undoubtedly have to quit their posts in Defence Industry Commission.

⁷⁰ During the last elections radical communists and nationalists won the majority of the seats in the Russian Duma (Federal Parliament). Many of them support the idea of selling arms (both legally and illegally).

⁷¹ G. Dunn, *Major Mafia Gangs in Russia. A report made for the Organized Crime Division of Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, 1997. A. Gurov, *Krasnaja Mafija (The Red Mafia)*, Moscow: Russian "Nizam" Research Group, 1995.

The process of rapid decay of the Soviet Army (now Russian Federal Army) started at least at the end of the 1970s with the period of 1993-98 as its culmination. Openly corrupt top brass, an underpaid officer corps, starving soldiers, undermanned and under-equipped regiments — all these factors have resulted in massive thefts of military property, including firearms, which can be easily sold on the black market or used for private purposes such as self-defence or work in private security structures. (Many sergeants and officers combine military service with part-time or freelance work in commercial companies, often as security officers. Strictly banned until 1992, this practice is nowadays widely tolerated).

Chart: Typical Scheme of Russian Criminal Syndicate



D. Defining the Region

The area of current research includes the territory of Transbaykal Military District embracing Chita and Irkutsk provinces and ethnic republics of Sakha-Yakutia and Buryat-Mongolia (approximately 80,000 military personnel at present) and Maritime (Primorskij) Military District embracing the provinces of Magadan, Kamchatka, and Sakhalin Island, territories of Maritim and Amur, and Chukotka (Chukchi) Autonomous District (approximately 77,000 military personnel at present).

The two Military Districts officially contain at least 60 divisions, which were originally supposed to be manned with at least 300,000 military personnel.⁷² However most of those divisions are 25 to 75% undermanned leaving thousands of small arms in stores and subject to regular misappropriation by officers, sergeants and private soldiers. The Russian Far East is also the area of Russian Pacific Fleet basing (Magadan, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, Vanino, Nakhodka, Vladivostok). The above-mentioned problems of the two military districts are typical for the Pacific Fleet as well.

Chinese and to some extent North Korean state-owned military industries also serve as sources of both legal and semi-illegal small arms proliferation in the area of research. In China, military industry is not controlled by organized criminal groups to the extent to which it has become in Russia (at least for the reason that in modern China there do not seem to exist well organized criminal structures similar to “Russian Mafia”).⁷³ However, corruption is well-developed in the Chinese military industry, which in combination with insufficient control over resources and production makes it possible to produce thousands of firearms for further sale, bypassing official export channels.

III. Major Routes of Small Arms Proliferation

Russian weapons are systematically moving to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos by sea from Vladivostok and Nakhodka to Haiphong and Saigon (Ho Chi Min City) and further through Vietnamese territory. It is also reported that they are often resold by Vietnamese and Cambodian authorities. Certain amounts of firearms might also be transported from Russia to Vietnam by air. We can suppose that some quantities of Russian weapons might be transported from the Russian Far East to Vietnam via Chinese territory, but as of today, no reports on that possible route have been seen.

Considerable numbers of Chinese-made light weapons are regularly passing across the Chinese-Russian border to Russia through two major points:

- Zabaikal'sk (Chita province) / Manchouli (Inner Mongolia) border crossing placed astride Hailar-Chita highway. Since March 1, 1998 (after revamping), this crossing has 14 lanes and is capable of handling 10,000 to 20,000 people and 1,500 cars daily. As of today, about 60 percent of trade between Russia and China passes through this point.
- Blagoveschensk (Amur territory) border crossing astride the Qiqihar-Blagoveschensk highway. This crossing has only eight lanes handling daily not more than 10,000 people and 950 cars.

Most Chinese-made firearms are brought to Russia from China by commercial trailers, often accompanied by false papers indicating other types of goods (for example, mechanical toys). Certain

⁷² In accordance with Russian military doctrine, average infantry division should be manned at least by 5,000 soldiers. Thus they would like to see at least 300,000 military personnel in the area of research (Transbaykal and Maritime Military Districts). However for the reasons arising from the framework of this research, most of Russian divisions are now 25 to 75% undermanned. That is why the amount of Russian soldiers and officers in the area of research does not exceed 157,000, as of writing.

⁷³ Both drug smuggling and prostitution in Hong Kong and Macao are nowadays controlled by Russian Mafia, and this assumes that Chinese criminal groups are at the moment weaker than Russian ones. G. Dunn, *Major Mafia Gangs in Russia. A report made for the Organized Crime Division of Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, 1997.

amounts of firearms are smuggled by Chinese and Russian private citizens (the so-called “Chelnoks” or “Shuttle-traders”). Actual forms of Russian-Chinese border trade and smuggling in combination with corrupt and under-equipped custom officers and border guards do not permit even approximate calculations of the amount of Chinese-made arms smuggled into Russian federation within the last three years.

We should also mention the secondary direction of small arms (both Russian- and Chinese-made) proliferation in East Siberia and the Far East. This direction runs from south to the north down the rivers Lena, Aldan, Nizhnaya Tunguska, Angara and Yenisey to the cities lying along these rivers and to small rural communities and settlements scattered in their basins.

Some high-quality Russian-made light weapons might be sold to North Korea (at least until 1991 this was one of the regular routes of Russian weapons). Several reported cases of drug smuggling across the Russian-North Korean border (from Korean side) suggest that this might also be one of the routes of small arms trade. (Experience has shown that drug smuggling routes are in most cases the routes of small arms smuggling as well). It is possible that an arms-smuggling route might run through the tiny section of Russian-Korean border Najin-Ungghi (N. Korean side) — Khasan-Posyette (Russian side), limited by the Sea of Japan on the south and the “Kyonghung sack” of Chinese territory on the north.⁷⁴

One of the possible sea routes of small arms proliferation might lead from Russian Far East (Vladivostok-Nakhodka) to Central and South America. Another reported sea route goes from Vladivostok to Japanese ports — possibly Osaka, Kobe and Yokohama.

Russian-made assault rifles and submachine guns, as well as ammunition have been reported in Nicaragua, El-Salvador and Colombia. As of today, we have discovered no materials tracing the delivery of the above mentioned arms across the Pacific Ocean. However this assumption does not seem unreasonable. We could also assume that if that delivery really took place, some amounts might be reloaded and stored in some ports at the Pacific coast of the USA and Canada.

IV. Major Recipients of Small Arms in the Area

In Siberia and the Russian Far East, there are at least four groups of regular recipients of small arms coming from both foreign and domestic sources:

- criminals belonging both to highly organized “Mafia” groups (“syndicates” and “brotherhoods”) and to smaller, spontaneously organized gangs;
- private citizens interested in purchasing firearms predominantly for self-defence;
- private security formations; and,
- different opposition and separatist groups.

Russian criminal groups in Siberia and the Far East, with their major headquarters in the cities of Vladivostok, Nakhodka, Khabarovsk, Blagoveschensk, Irkutsk and Yakutsk, (as well as criminal groups scattered all over Russian Federation) prefer Russian- and Western-made (American, German, and Israeli) weapons for permanent use and storage.⁷⁵

Those groups regularly purchase a considerable amounts of Russian-made firearms and ammunition which comes either directly from the military plants (from Tula province, the Urals and other arms-producing areas of the country), or is stolen from army barracks and stores. Some small amounts of Western-made (predominantly American and German) firearms have also been detected in possession of

⁷⁴ C. Bickers. “Bear Market: Russia Wants to be the Top Arms Supplier to Asia,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 September 1997, p.25. “Russia Hits Korea on Drugs,” *AP Online*, 13 November 1997, 9:12 PM; *RF Daily News Release*, 13 November, 1997; “Nizam” Research Group, Moscow, Russia.

⁷⁵ M. Dixelius and A. Konstantinov. *Rysslands Undre Vaerld (Russia’s Underworld)*, Swedish, 1995; A. Gurov, *Krasnaja Mafija (The Red Mafia)*, Russian, 1995; “Nizam” Research Group, Moscow, Russia.

criminals in Siberia and the Far East. These weapons, as well as the ammunition they acquire might be sporadically coming from North America (predominantly via Vladivostok and Nakhodka) and/or from Western Europe (probably through the Trans-Siberian railway).

However, for contract killings and for arming the lowest-class recruits, organized mobsters of Russia tend to use Chinese products mainly because of their low price. According to information provided by the Moscow Nizam Research Group, the black-market price for the latest model of Russian-made AKM assault rifles may vary from \$US 1000 to \$US 1200 depending on the area and season, while Chinese-made AKM assault rifles are sold in the range of \$US 400 to \$US 600. The similar ratio (\$US 6 for one box of 20 Russian-made AKM cartridges to \$US 4 for the similar but made in China one) exists for ammunition.⁷⁶

For contract killings, acts of terror and property destruction, the “Russian Mafia” also uses various sorts of mines and explosives, most of which are produced by specialists working in state laboratories and using state equipment. However, some parts and elements are partially stolen from the stores of the Russian Army, or imported from abroad.

Millions of private citizens of the Russian Federation not involved in organized criminal activities, are also regular purchasers of Russian- and Chinese-made firearms. Often illegally, they acquire firearms at their own risk believing that it might protect their lives, their families and property. Urban residents tend to purchase pistols and revolvers, while rural residents prefer to buy rifles, automatic and even assault rifles.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, wearing firearms was a tradition and part of a way of life for rural residents of the Russian-Chinese frontier and remote northern areas of East Siberia and the Far East (both descendants of settlers from European Russia/Eastern Europe and Native Siberians). The main reasons for this tradition were:

- hunting as one of the important means of survival;
- the need to protect human lives from wild animals;
- dangerous atmosphere of the frontier with often and unexpected attacks from China;
- petty and high criminal activity, and regular escapes of inmates from prisons and concentration camps; and,
- low density of population in combination with poor activity of law enforcement structures.

After the end of Civil War (1917-1922), the Communists tried to ban the private ownership of small arms in the area, but that policy was not effective, and semi-illegal possession of small arms by private citizens finally became tolerated by the authorities. Thus almost every family residing in the area keeps and regularly updates its own small arsenal of small arms. Although it is absolutely obligatory that every small arm in the country should be registered, most Siberians tend to neglect this legal prescription. In most cases, residents of frontier and northern areas tend to acquire Russian or Chinese arms (depending on the purchasers’ wealth), but some copies of American rifles have also been noted. A similar situation is observed with respect to small arms acquisition and registration by various private security and detective companies in the area, as well as in numerous prospectors’ and explorers’ teams operating in the remote northern territories.

The Russian and international media have been regularly reporting the presence of small arms in the arsenals of various paramilitary opposition groups. Among those groups worthy of mention are several right-wing and nationalist organizations having branches in Siberia and the Russian Far East, namely: Kossacks, Pamyat’, Russian National Union, Skinheads, Young Patriots of Russia, and the leftist terrorist “Revvoysenovet RSFSR” (“Revolutionary Council of Russian Soviet Socialist Republic.”) Several representatives of other radical organizations, among them the Liberal Democratic Party, leftist Union of Russian Communists and different associations of Afghan War veterans, have also mentioned in

⁷⁶ \$4 and \$6 are the prices not for single cartridges but for a box of 20. This information on Russian black market prices was gained from “Nizam” Research Group based in Moscow. As of writing, we possess no other reliable sources of information on Russian black market prices for small arms and ammunition.

their public speeches that their branches might also have small arms arsenals. Separatist movements in some autonomous areas of Russian Siberia and Far East, namely the Republics of Sakha-Yakoutia and Tannu-Tuva might be also recipients of small arms both from Russian Army stores and from China.⁷⁷

Vietnam and Cambodia are still the main recipients of Russian weapons in East Asia. They acquire Russian weapons for their domestic army and police use, as well as for further sale to Myanmar, Malaysia and the Philippines. The North Korean Army might still be one of the recipients of some high-quality Russian weapons, including small arms.

Certain amounts of Russian-made firearms are exported from the Russian Maritim Territory to Japan in exchange for Japanese cars.⁷⁸ This “business” has been organized by the Kovalsky Mafia Syndicate (with its headquarters in Vladivostok) and supposedly the Yakuza (see Appendix). We can assume that various separatist movements of China — among them Uigur and Tibetan separatists, as well as guerilla movements in Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and Philippines — might have been, or will be, explored and approached by Russian arms traders looking for new markets.

Some Tibetan tribes and communities in remote areas of the Tibetan “Autonomous Region” and the province of Qinghai (for example the tribe of Golog which officially has still not surrendered to Chinese communist troops) have been reported to possess arsenals of Chinese-made firearms, including assault rifles, and to purchase ammunition on a regular basis.

At present, there are about 157,000 Russian troops deployed in the area (the forces of Trans-Baykal and Maritim military districts). Keeping in mind the equipment saved for tactical and strategic reserves, together with some out-of-date weapons, there should be deployed at least 1.5 - 2 million units of small arms at various military stores. Widespread embezzlement of small arms belonging to the army may have resulted in the transfer of at least 5 to 10% of the above amounts to underground stores of criminal groups, as well as into the hands of private citizens. About 350,000 units of small arms (pistols, submachine guns and assault rifles) should be deployed at MVD (Federal Police), OMON (Special Police Forces) and FSB (Federal Security Service) stores in the area.

In spite of widespread corruption and collaboration with criminal structures typical of Russian law enforcement structures within the last years, the stores of the above forces have never been reported as objects of embezzlement. Private citizens (both involved and relatively non-involved in criminal activity) residing in the research area, are expected to hold at least 2,000,000 small arms (rifles, automatic rifles, carbines, assault rifles pistols and revolvers). The possible number of small arms in underground (“Mafia”-controlled) arsenals in the area is estimated at 3,000 to 10,000 items including Kalashnikov assault rifles and machine guns, TT and TM pistols, Uzi rifles and submachine guns, as well as antitank weapons and grenade launchers (RPG-22-1 “Mukha”).

V. Possible Consequences

A. *Escalation of Crime*

Further development of small arms proliferation in the area might boost further escalation of crime and organized crime in Siberia and the Russian Far East, especially regarding new wars between different criminal groups.⁷⁹ It may also boost crime in China. As of writing, kept under relative control

⁷⁷ On 1 April 1998, *Russkij Telegraf* (a Russian Newspaper based in Moscow) quoted the new Minister of Internal Affairs Stepashin, Prosecutor-General Yurii Skuratov and Federal Security Service (FSB) head Nikolai Kovalev mentioning Tannu-Tuva as one of the areas of “extremist activity.” The insurgent groups in Tuva are illicit recipients of small arms. As for Cambodia and Vietnam, they are Russian partners in legal trade.

⁷⁸ G. Dunn, *op.cit.*, “Nizam” Research Group, Moscow, Russia.

⁷⁹ Escalation of crime all over the Russian Federation including Siberia and the Far East is a reality, due to numerous reasons beyond the scope of this report. The number of mobsters tends to increase and mobsters demand small arms. Of course, small arms proliferation may or may not lead to further escalation of violence.

by Chinese law enforcement structures, criminal activity might strongly escalate in the face of economic reforms, corruption and small arms proliferation. The process of proliferation may also escalate criminal activity in Mongolia, situated between Russia and China and dependent on both neighbours.

B. Escalation of Corruption

Most salaries paid to Russian policemen, customs officials, etc., do not exceed \$US 400 per month while purely subsistence wages for one person are at least \$US 800. Further escalation of criminal activity in the Russian Far East and Siberia, in combination with ongoing underpayment of law enforcement officers, makes it necessary for them either to look for additional part-time jobs, or to take bribes and cooperate with criminals. The latter variant tends to seem more attractive to the increasing percentage of Russian law enforcement officers and leading to the formation of what Russian criminologist A. Gurov calls “the Criminal State.”

C. Export of Crime

Further proliferation of small arms in the area together with the escalation of corruption and helplessness of law enforcement structures, leads to accumulation of funds in the hands of organized criminal groups in Russia and China, as well as the growth of their members. As a result, criminal groups are already exploring such prospective “business areas” as Japan, Singapore, USA and Canada. During the last five years, numerous representatives of Russian and Chinese organized criminal groups have penetrated Canada and USA and have started building networks here. Within the next ten years, their influence in North America could significantly increase and drastically worsen the criminal situation here.

Canada has already been used by Russian and Chinese criminal structures as a place for money-laundering and permanent residence. This process might develop further if not brought under control, and turn Canada into a springboard for Russian criminal groups used for penetrating the USA.⁸⁰

D. Terrorism and Insurgent Groups

Concentration of small arms in the arsenals of the “Russian Mafia” has made contract killings and other acts of terror typical elements of modern Russian life. If not brought under control, this process may expand into new countries and areas. Concentration of small arms in the arsenals of rightist and leftist opposition parties and organizations might provoke political violence, in turn increasing the flow of political refugees to North American countries.

Illicit trade in small arms in Siberia might facilitate separatism and violence in some ethnic “republics” of Russian Federation (mainly Sakha-Yakoutia and Tannu-Tuva). Accumulation of small arms in the hands of citizens might eventually provoke high-scale ethnic violence between native and Russian Siberians on one hand, and Chinese and Korean settlers on the other. This scenario might also create refugee problems.

Accumulations of small arms in the area might activate so-called “Siberian separatism.”⁸¹ At the moment, this sentiment is popular among a relatively small number of Slavonic-speaking Siberians, but

However it is most likely that small arms acquired by mobsters for their “actions” will lead to an increase in violence when used.

⁸⁰ Russian small arms might certainly create a risk if they penetrate Canada. However, the researcher does not possess information about the existence of a Canadian market for illegally imported Russian small arms. At this time, there is no information on groups in Canada that might be interested in acquiring illegally imported Russian small arms.

⁸¹ Siberian separatism is a phenomenon that is different from separatist movements in Sakha-Yakoutia and Tuva. Although both Tuva and Sakha are parts of Siberia, their separatist movements could be regarded as types of “Native Siberian separatism,” while Siberian separatism (without the word “Native” in front of it) is a separatist movement among certain part of Siberians with mixed Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Polish, German and

the idea of an independent Siberia might someday cause political and even military confrontation in the area.

VI. Possible Policy Options

The challenge of small arms proliferation facing national governments requires international cooperation and coordination. Some of the general tasks which must be addressed, include the following:

- collection and regular updating of accurate information on small arms flows — both legitimate and illicit;
- monitoring the traffic routes;
- locating and confiscation illegal stores and depots; and,
- identifying the leaders of criminal and paracriminal groups involved and interested in illicit proliferation of small arms.

More international coordination in the field of exchange information and tracing, as well as the intercept of the illicit movement of small arms are among possible options. However, experience suggests that these options do not work well either in China, or in Russia because of corruption and traditional mistrust towards foreigners/westerners in both countries.

Accumulation of information and tracing might work better if a considerable number of competent law-enforcement officers in the area would serve as direct sources of information for law enforcement structures of Canada and USA.⁸² This might work well in Russia for two reasons:

In spite of traditional mistrust, there exists a stereotype of a “Mighty American Cop” among Russians including Russian law enforcement officers, and that stereotypical figure is respected.

Russian law enforcement officers are underpaid and open to part-time jobs for other employers (among them criminal gangs). Thus many of them might also work for non-criminal employers overseas representing, for example, Canadian or American law enforcement structures.

It is presently an opportune time to recruit them, as they are relatively free of old communist ideology, while new radical nationalist ideology is still not strong enough to prevent them from being hired by foreign structures.

other East European backgrounds, i.e., the descendants of “white settlers” who first came to Siberia at the end of the 16th century.

⁸² They should not do that unless paid for that as agents. As of writing, many Russian law enforcement officers are open to collaboration with Mafia mainly for financial reasons. For the same reasons they might also be open to collaboration with Canadian or American law enforcement structures.

Appendix: Major Russian Far East Gangs Involved in Illicit Arms Trade

*Vladivostok*⁸³

Being a relatively safe city until 1991, Vladivostok is a sort of “Criminal Capital” of Siberia/Far East at the moment. It is very attractive to various gangs due to possibilities for trade with China, Japan and both Koreas. Vladivostok’s “brotherhoods” are still in the process of organizing and consolidating. They have a reputation for extreme violence and cruelty. Mr. Vyacheslav Ivan’kov (Nickname “Yaponchick”⁸⁴), one of the top “Crowned Thieves” (“Vor v Zakone”) of Russia and now serving his term in a New York prison, grew up in Vladivostok and established its first organized gangs.

As of today, there are nine major mafia syndicates in Vladivostok. They are: Mikho, Kostyanaya, Kovyl’skaya, Makor, Trifonskaya, Pogonyalo, Anashkinskaya, Bachurinskaya and Mytischinskaya.

At least five of them are reported to be involved in arms-smuggling. The following provides some background information on each.

Mikho

SIZE: About 100 full-time members, plus 100 -300 “part-time” drafters.

LEADER: Mr. Mikhail Ossipov (Nickname “Mikho”). He has an M.A. in Economics. Reported to be very intelligent. He served his first prison term for business activity, which was at that time illegal and prosecuted in Russia (at that time, USSR). Ossipov does not belong to the caste of “Crowned Thieves” (“Vor v Zakone”).

CONTACTS: Well established contacts with several syndicates in Moscow, with the “Empire of Dyadya Vasya” in Komsomolsk-Na-Amure (350 miles to the north of Vladivostok), contacts in Japan, Macau and Mainland China.

SPHERES OF ACTIVITY: Drug-smuggling, arms smuggling, extortion, prostitution, goods-smuggling from China, illegal immigration from China.

Kostyanaya (Russian for “Bone Syndicate”)

SIZE: About 80 full-time members, plus 100 -200 “part-time” drafters.

LEADER: Mr. Alexander Kostenko (Nickname “Kostyan.” Russian for “Bone”). The oldest gang-leader in the area. Served his first term for “black-marketing.” Does not belong to the caste of “Crowned Thieves” (“Vor v Zakone”).

CONTACTS: Contacts in China and probably Japan.

SPHERES OF ACTIVITY: Drug-smuggling and production, arms smuggling, extortion, prostitution, import of cars.

Kovyl’skaya

SIZE: Unknown

LEADER: Mr. Alexey Kovyl’ (variants: Kowalsli, Kowalewski, Kovalenko), Nickname “Kovyl.”

⁸³ In Pigeon-Russian, called “Vladick.”

⁸⁴ For unclear reasons, when mentioning Mr Vyacheslav Ivan’kov’s (Ivankov’s) nickname, many North American media and official documents tend to call him “Yaponets” (Russian for “The Japanese”). However his real nickname is “Yaponchick” which in “Pigeon-Russian” means “Baby-Japanese.” We should mention here that Mr. Ivankov has absolutely no Japanese background. Neither does he look Oriental (like some Siberians do). “Yaponchick” was a nickname of one of the most famous thieves of the 1910s-1920s from the city of Odessa (now a Ukrainian city). That figure was as famous and legendary among the mobsters of Russia as, for example, Al Capone in the US. Mr. Ivan’kov is one of the most powerful figures of the modern Russian underworld. Maybe that goal (to become one of the key-figures of criminal world) encouraged him to choose such a nickname.

CONTACTS: Unknown. In 1992 attempted to establish partnership with the Yakuza.
SPHERES OF ACTIVITY: Unknown, plus import of Japanese second-hand cars for Russian firearms.

Makor

SIZE: About 100 members, most of them former athletes and martial arts experts.

LEADER: Mr. Alexander Makrenko (Nickname “Makor”). He is a former kick-boxer. Served his first term for hooliganism and extortion. Makor does not belong to the caste of “Crowned Thieves” (“Vor v Zakone”).

Another important figure: Anatoly Koptev, former kick-boxing champion of the USSR.

CONTACTS: Unknown.

SPHERES OF ACTIVITY: Arms smuggling, contract killing, extortion and prostitution.

Anashkinskaya

SIZE: About 100 members.

LEADER: Until 1994, Mr. Anashkin (probably a nickname). After his arrest in 1994, the new leader is Mr. Andrey Vytirailov. Vytirailov probably belongs to the caste of “Crowned Thieves” (“Vor v Zakone”).

CONTACTS: China, Hong Kong, Macau, Japan.

SPHERES OF ACTIVITY: Arms smuggling, extortion, prostitution (also in Hong Kong and Macau).

Among the smaller gangs of Vladivostok, one should mention the **Azeri Gang** consisting of immigrants from Azerbaijan. Although relatively poorly organized, this purely ethnic gang works in contact with other Azeri gangs acting in Irkutsk, Yekaterinburg, Moscow and St. Petersburg. They are reported to be involved in arms smuggling and have some contacts with the Yakuza.

Komsomolsk-Na-Amure

“The Empire of Dyadya Vasya”

SIZE: About 200 full-time and part-time members.

LEADER: Yevgeniy Petrovich Vasin (Nickname “Dyadya Vasya” Russian for “Uncle Vasya”). Vasin is one of the “Crowned Thieves” (“Vor v Zakone”).

CONTACTS: Well established contacts with several syndicates in Moscow and with Mikho syndicate in Vladivostok (Vasin is a personal friend of “Mikho”), contacts in China.

SPHERES OF ACTIVITY: Goods-smuggling from China, possibly arms smuggling.

There are several criminal groups based outside the research area but nevertheless involved in arms-smuggling and proliferation in the area. They are:

Yekaterinburg

Uralmash Syndicate: 600 members, leader Konstantin Tsygankov.

Tsentrálnaya Bratva (Russian for “Downtown Brotherhood”): 200 members, leader Eduard Kazaryan.

Moscow

The 21st Century Association: 1,500 members, leader Anzor Kikaleishvili.

Solntsevskaya Bratva (Russian for “Solntsevo Brotherhood”): 4,000 members, leader Mikhailov (“Mikhas”).

Podolskaya Bratva (Russian for “Podolsk Brotherhood”): 700 members, leaders Alexander Zakharov (“Zakhar”) and Andrey Lalalin (“Luchok”).

St. Petersburg

Tambovskaya Group: 1800 members, leader Kumarin.

Vorkutinskaya Group: 2000 members, leader unknown.

“The Empire Of Malyshev”: 2300 members, leader Alexander Malyshev.

Kazanskaya Bratva (Russian for “The Brotherhood of Kazan”): 2000 members, leader Gzhizhewicz (predominantly Tatar ethnic gang).

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