
Disarmament

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Agenda item 2

Discussing the Control of Ammunition Stockpiling

Report of the Chair

I. Statement of the Problem

1. Ammunition is a broad term for all missiles and devices used for offense and defense. Ammunition can be explosive or non explosive and refers to the complete round/cartridge or its components, including bullets or projectiles used in any small arm or light weapon. The types of ammunition most common in conflict areas and illicit activities are small arms ammunition, rocket propelled grenades, light mortar rounds and improvised explosive devices. [2]

2. Clear and extensive data on the location and extent of ammunition stockpiles is lacking. More than 80

3. The stockpiling of ammunition is of growing concern to the international community as it can form a double-problem in itself. Security as well as safety measures must be taken into consideration with regard to ammunition stockpiles since much of the ammunition circulating among armed groups has been illicitly diverted from national security forces, and warehouses of ammunition can be extremely dangerous when placed in densely populated areas. [2]

- Since 2001, there have been 132 known explosive events in ammunition storage depots, resulting in over 3,273 fatalities and 3,809 injured. [4]

II. History of the Problem

4. Small arms ammunition may last more than 20 years, so significant stockpiles of ammunition can build up for years after conflicts have ended if unused ammunition is not disposed of. Hundreds of thousands of tons of surplus ammunition inherited from the Cold War are held in Eastern Europe. [7] Ukraine, for example, as a past base for strategic reserves of weapons and ammunition, had a large military industrial complex.

It is now faced with a huge challenge in terms of ammunition stockpiles that poses a threat for the entire region. Estimates suggest that up to 2.5 million tonnes of ammunition may be stored in Ukrainian ammunition depots that are designed to store far less than that amount, leaving a significant proportion in exposed and inappropriately equipped storage facilities. This can only result in greater risk to communities and will accelerate the deterioration of the ammunition [8].

5. Ammunition stockpile explosions are a self-perpetuating problem, because once a warehouse experiences an explosion, the remainder of the stockpile becomes unstable and prone to future explosions, furthering the potential danger to civilians.

6. While varying legal frameworks for the regulation of individual ammunition and firearm ownership exist at the national level, such frameworks are largely unsupported by international agreements or treaties. Although the legally binding 2001 UN Protocol against the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms and Ammunition stipulates that states adopt national legislation that makes the illicit trafficking in ammunition a criminal offence, only applies to commercial transfers and explicitly excludes state-to-state transactions and transfers by states made for national security interests.[7] In December 2005 the UN introduced a politically binding instrument to enable states to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW). Despite wide support that this agreement should include ammunition and be legally binding, a handful of states prevented agreement on these crucial issues especially the USA, Egypt, and Iran, which opposed both a legally binding agreement and the inclusion of ammunition [7].

7. Ammunition stockpile controls remain inadequate in many states, however Brazil has adopted legislation in 2003 and 2004 requiring that every quantity of 10,000 rounds or less of small arms ammunition for security forces be marked by the producer with a code that is unique to the particular order and end-user of the ammunition. Producers are required to keep records that allow for identification of the particular force and depot receiving the ammunition. The new legislation was adopted due to high concern about frequent diversions and leakage from state stockpiles. State authorities can track ammunition that was diverted or misused, providing a powerful disincentive to the misuse of ammunition and culmination of undocumented stockpiles.

III. Potential Solutions

8. The disarmament of ammunition stockpiles is a vast and multifaceted issue, one with various possible solutions especially when dealing with stockpiles stored in unsafe locations such as highly populated, or war torn cities. Transfers through sale or gift to a country with proper stockpiling protocol, increase in accuracy of known ammo stockpiles, an increase in transparency of tracking, production, and ownership of ammunition as well as increased use in training, or deep sea dumping and destruction are all factors to investigate when considering possible solutions.

9. Delegates should also consider requiring background checks for those purchasing small arms and light weapons at venues such as gun shows, which would abate the issue only to certain degree. It may be necessary to consider how this committee would be involved in the installment of background check laws. It also may be beneficial to address the possibility of increasing required security as a potential solution, which would allow gun dealerships to have a decreased chance of robbery. Frequent, government-implemented checks of the stores could help to ensure the absence of corruption.

IV. Position and Research Tips

10.
 - Is your country a major producer of small arms and light weapons?
 - Has your country taken part in illegal small arms and light weapons trade?
 - How has your country participated in the past to address the problem?
 - Are you collecting specific information and evidence about your country and issue that can be used during debate?
 - Are you using reliable online resources?

Useful Web Sources

- <<http://www.un.org/>>
- <<https://www.cia.gov/>>
- <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/>>
- <<http://www.nytimes.com/>>
- <<http://www.state.gov/>>
- <<http://www.economist.com/>>

V. Note to Delegates

I hope this background paper has served as a useful resource for all of you. I am very excited to be your Chair come this fall. Be prepared and ready to debate. I am glad that all of you are participating in MUNSA XVI.

-Alexa Zanikos

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