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Global Black-Market Arms Trade Should Be Next Target of NGOs

A campaign to curb world-wide illicit arms trafficking is the natural heir to inherit the energy and skill of the extremely successful effort mobilized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ban landmines.

The black-market trade in small arms and light weapons today sustains bloody conflicts around the world and arms criminals, terrorists and drug-traffickers. As a result, large areas of the world have become extremely dangerous for civilians, relief and development workers, businesspeople and peacekeepers.

The moral and practical imperative for focusing on black-market arms is comparable to that which drives the landmine effort. The easy availability of illicit weapons, in particular AK-47 assault rifles, is killing hundreds of thousands of people around the world every year, causing many more casualties than do mines. In addition, the crime, warfare and instability engendered by the illicit arms traffic affect the work of many, if not all, of the NGOs campaigning to rid the world of mines. And, since landmines are often trafficked through the black market to insurgent groups, a campaign on illicit arms would complement on-going negotiations by governments to outlaw mines.

A Campaign on Illicit Arms is Feasible

When NGOs formed the international campaign to ban mines in 1992, many viewed their goal—a treaty banning the production, trade, and use of anti-personnel landmines—as quixotic, since mines have been an integral part of army operations around the world for decades. But, the global campaign catalyzed by NGOs will result in such a treaty this December. Nearly 100 governments have already committed to the ban.

A campaign to curb gun-running is as feasible as banning landmines. On page 5 we highlight seven reasons for the success of the mine ban effort. Each of these reasons applies to a campaign on the black market. For example, the mine campaign benefitted from the fact that the weapons industry in general did not have a vested interest in the issue and, therefore,

did not oppose the campaign. Similarly, the arms industry by and large does not profit from illicit transfers and would likely not hinder efforts to curb them.

Governments Oppose Black Market

In some ways, a campaign on illicit arms trafficking would appear *more* feasible than a landmine ban. Most governments of the world already oppose the illicit trade, which arms criminals and insurgents. Speaking before the 50th UN General Assembly, President Clinton urged governments of the world to work with the United States “to shut down the grey markets that outfit terrorists and criminals with firearms.” The Organization of American States has recently placed illegal arms trafficking on its agenda, having become concerned about the impact on governance and crime in the hemisphere. And the UN Secretary-General called for direct action “to deal with the flourishing illicit traffic in light weapons, which is destabilizing the security of a number of countries.”

But despite rhetorical support by governments, a world-wide campaign is needed. Many of the steps necessary to effectively curb the black-market traffic on a national, regional and global basis will require a great deal of political will. That’s where the NGOs come in. In addition, such a campaign will require the intellectual resources of the NGO community to research and document the illicit trade and to think creatively about workable methods to curb it.

For our part, FAS has built up a database on illicit

This newsletter highlights the interactions between the global campaign to ban landmines, efforts to establish a “code of conduct” for government-sponsored arms exports, and the problems of the illicit arms trade. It is based on recent work by FAS’ Arms Sales Monitoring Project, including research trips to Southern Africa, Southeast Asia and Turkey by project director Lora Lumpe.

arms trafficking, and has undertaken a series of studies to focus attention on the deadly and destabilizing consequences of gun-running. Last fall we published our first report in this series, *A Scourge of Guns*, focusing on Latin America. Forthcoming studies will cover Africa and Southeast Asia.

As with the landmine campaign, one of the first steps of a black-market campaign is to clearly articulate the goals and stages. Possible objectives range from the mundane (increased resources for customs and export control) to the more ambitious (barring government-run covert arms supply operations).

To explore the interest of NGOs and foundations in a campaign to catalyze new efforts—and reinforce existing ones—to shut down the illicit traffic, we invite you to contribute comments to our illicit arms campaign page at <<http://www.fas.org/asmp/black-market/guestbook.html>>. Or write to me, and indicate whether you want your comments posted. —Lora Lumpe

New Council and Sponsors

In FAS' annual council election on June 30, 1997, new council members Eric H. Arnett, Priscilla J. McMillan and Arthur H. Rosenfeld were elected to replace outgoing council members Ruth S. Adams, John S. Toll and Jeremy P. Waletzky.

Nineteen Nobel Prize winners have joined FAS's board of sponsors: Baruj Benacerraf, J. Michael Bishop, Nicolaas Bloembergen, Stanley Cohen, E.J. Corey, Johann Deisenhofer, Gertrude B. Elion, Jerome I. Friedman, Joseph L. Goldstein, Roger C.L. Guillemin, Herbert Hauptman, David H. Hubel, Edwin G. Krebs, Franco Modigliani, Joseph E. Murray, Douglas D. Osheroff, Richard J. Roberts, Richard E. Smalley, Jack Steinberger, and Torsten N. Wiesel.

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Illicit Arms Market Sustains Global Conflicts

The 1990s have been a period of intense internal conflict, most often waged around ethno-nationalist or religious fault lines. Although a handful of wars have dominated the press (e.g., Somalia, Yugoslavia, Haiti, Rwanda, Liberia, and Zaire), there are nearly thirty major intrastate conflicts being fought today. Few of the combatants in these wars produce any, let alone all, of the weapons they use. Many obtain their arms through the international black market.

Wars Taking Heavy Toll on Civilians

These wars, pitting state security forces against guerrillas seeking greater political autonomy, control of disputed territory, or control of the state itself, have killed more than *one million* people in the 1990s. More than 90 percent of war casualties today are believed to be civilians. In addition, contemporary conflicts often target homes, infrastructure and agricultural production, creating massive refugee flows. In 1995, over 41 million people world-wide were displaced, mostly as a result of war or political repression. This number has increased by almost 60 percent over the past decade. Even when conflicts are ended, they usually leave a legacy of an armed and insecure society, which undermines the re-establishment of governance.

Both expensive, high tech arms and cheap, low technology weapons are being used to wage these wars. Almost all government forces have some major weaponry, like bombers or attack helicopters, armored personnel carriers, and artillery. Only through the use of such "heavy" equipment is it possible to raze villages and cities, as has been done in many conflicts. On the other end of the spectrum, though, small arms and "light" (man-portable) weapons, such as assault rifles, mortars, grenades and landmines, are used by *all* armed forces—government troops as well as insurgents and bandits. Their very prevalence makes them responsible for much of the killing around the world.

While government forces usually find a ready supply of weapons through the legal international arms market, insurgents generally must rely on the black market to sustain their combat. Intensive efforts to curb the black market would provide relief to people around the world by decreasing insurgents' ability to wage war.

Of course, limiting illicit transfers alone would tend to favor the position of governments, when repressive government policies might provide just cause to militants. The solution in such cases is not only to restrict arms to the insurgents, but also to curtail weapons to the repressive regimes. For several years, we have sought to do so through the enactment of a "code of conduct" for state-sanctioned arms transfers, and this campaign is now making gains (*see p. 6*). The two measures taken together—curbing arms to repressive governments and to insurgent groups—will reduce the likelihood of war and help bring combatants to the negotiating table.

Defining the Black Market

Black-market arms deals violate the laws or policies of one or more of the states where the transaction occurs—the source country, transit countries, or the recipient country. The magnitude of the illicit market is unknown, but it is assumed to be increasing, both because of the many on-going wars (creating demand) and the large supply of arms freed up with the end of the Cold War. Even the recent conclusion of several long-running conflicts—in Central America and Southern Africa—has contributed to the black market glut, as peace processes failed to adequately disarm warring parties, and these weapons are recycled to other wars or to bandits.

Covert gun-running by intelligence or other government agencies to insurgent groups has historically been a major source of illicit arms. Weapons supplied by the CIA to guerrillas in Afghanistan, Angola and Central America during the 1980s not only sustained brutal fighting then, but two of those wars continue today. In addition, some CIA-supplied arms—including *Stinger* surface-to-air missiles—are now presumed to be in the hands of drug-traffickers and terrorists.

The domestic U.S. gun market is another major source of illicit arms. There are an estimated 250 million firearms circulating in the United States, and over 245,000 federally-licensed firearms dealers. Some of the five or six million firearms purchased annually in the United States by private buyers are acquired by middlemen working on behalf of arms traffickers who smuggle them out of the country. —L.L. □

The Campaign to Ban Mines: Model for a Campaign on Illicit Arms

In February I attended the fourth annual conference of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), in Maputo, Mozambique. This phenomenally successful campaign holds many lessons for an effort to curb the black-market weapons trade.

Landmines have been standard in most armies of the world for decades. Sewn in the ground during conflicts, these weapons lie in wait, killing and maiming long after the fighting has ended. Approximately 100 million mines currently litter more than 60 countries. The State Department estimates that they cause 500 deaths or injuries per week, primarily to civilians and often to children, and the presence—or feared presence—of landmines hinders farming, commerce, development, travel and play.

In 1992, a handful of non-governmental organizations banded together to initiate the ICBL. These groups, which included the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, Handicap International, and Medico International, were building prosthetic limbs for war victims in Cambodia and Vietnam. They literally could not keep up with demand due to the heavy loss of limbs from mines, so they decided to attack the problem at its source. Five years later, they are about to achieve their eponymous goal, a treaty banning production, stockpiling and use of mines.

The campaign has grown into one of the largest, most energetic, and savviest grass-roots efforts in the world today. Over 1,000 organizations, in more than 60 countries, have joined the effort (FAS signed on in 1993). National mine ban campaigns have been established in dozens of countries, and yearly strategy meetings of these groups are held to advance the goal of a global ban. This year's meeting in Maputo was the fourth convocation of the movement.

Governments Join the "Ban" Bandwagon

The conference was a major event in Mozambique and a huge success. More than four hundred people from 30 countries attended. Graca Machel (the widow of Mozambique's first president) and current President Joachim Chissano opened the meeting. Ms. Machel, a patron of the conference, had been highly sensitized to the toll of mines through her role in overseeing a major study for UNICEF on children and war.

A few days before the conference opened, the

Congress Leads White House on Anti-Mine Efforts

The mine ban campaign has worked very effectively through and with the U.S. Congress. In 1991, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) passed a one-year moratorium on U.S. exports of anti-personnel mines. The next year he extended the moratorium for three more years. This Congressional initiative forced the administration to embrace the issue. The administration, in turn, pressed U.S. allies to follow suit, which many of them did.

Today, Congress is still leading the way, prodding the White House to commit to outlaw the use of mines as quickly as possible. Over a year ago, President Clinton announced his support for a mine ban, but in January of this year he chose to pursue negotiations for a treaty through the cumbersome U.N. Conference on Disarmament (CD). As of this writing, the 63-member CD had still not even agreed to put landmines on its agenda. Many CD participants oppose diverting the forum's attention from nuclear arms control and disarmament.

A faster alternative exists in negotiations initiated by the Canadian government last October. The "Ottawa process" will yield a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines this December, and nearly 100 governments have already said they will sign this treaty. The U.S. administration is withholding its support because a handful of mine-producing and using governments—Russia, China, India and Pakistan—are not in the Canadian process, but are in the CD. Unless the administration quickly reverses its position, and joins in the Canadian treaty-drafting process, it will be stigmatized with these other hold-outs by the majority of the world's nations.

At a Capitol Hill press conference on June 12, Reps. Lane Evans (D-IL) and Jack Quinn (R-NY) released a letter signed by over one-third of their House colleagues urging President Clinton to forsake the CD and embrace the Canadian initiative.

At the same event, Senators Leahy and Chuck Hagel (R-NE) unveiled the "Landmine Elimination Act of 1997" (S.896). The bill, which would bar new deployments of anti-personnel landmines by U.S. forces beginning on January 1, 2000, already has overwhelming bi-partisan support in the Senate.

government of South Africa announced its support for an immediate and total mine ban treaty. On the second day of the conference, officials from Mozambique's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the Council of Ministers had just approved a resolution "banning the production, use and unauthorized transfer of anti-personnel mines" and announcing the government's dedication "to see the planet free from anti-personnel landmines." On the third day, some 20 governments—represented by their Ambassadors or Foreign Ministry officials—came to the conference to inform participants of their stance on the question of an immediate ban on landmines, and on whether they support the initiative by the Canadian government to conclude a treaty in December of this year. Adding their names to a growing list, the governments of Swaziland and Malawi announced their support for an immediate mine ban.

Participating in the conference gave me a good chance to reflect on the reasons for the overwhelming success of the landmines campaign, relative to other efforts against weapons trading and use.

Reasons for Success

1) A global ban on anti-personnel landmines is a discrete, achievable goal (more so, for example, than shutting down the entire international arms trade). Landmines are, relative to other segments of the arms industry, small business. There is no big-monied lobby opposing the NGO efforts.

2) Landmines negatively impact the work of several different types of organizations—refugee, development, veterans, human rights, peace/religious, medical—creating a very broad-based coalition. Working outside of but parallel to the ICBL, several U.N. agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have brought tremendous credibility, clout, and resources to bear on the issue.

3) The excellent leadership of the ICBL has kept member NGOs well informed and "on message" through newsletters, e-mail, the internet, annual meetings of the campaign, and well-orchestrated NGO presence at governmental meetings. When the campaign was able to excite a foreign ministry (Canada) to take up its cause, the negotiation of a ban treaty became a reality. In addition, the U.S. campaign has benefitted from extremely dedicated and able legislative leadership by Senator Patrick Leahy and Represent-



Mozambiquan de-miners painstakingly scour the countryside near Maputo. There are an estimated 600,000 mines present.

tative Lane Evans.

4) The issue has many extremely effective spokespeople, not only in the campaign leaders, but also in de-miners, mine victims, and medical staff working with victims. People directly affected by mines make very compelling spokespeople, not easily dismissed by politicians, diplomats, and the military. In addition, the campaign has attracted high-profile spokespeople, most notably Princess Diana.

5) The campaign has used visual media very effectively, preparing early on several traveling photograph exhibits and videos highlighting the impact of landmines, including a televised documentary. National campaigns have used these materials to educate their public and policymakers. In the past year, the ICRC and the ICBL have run commercials on international and U.S. network TV to reach a much broader audience.

6) Members of the campaign have produced analysis to back up their case for a mine ban, or to refute specific arguments raised by opponents. Over a dozen books have been published, on the technology of mines, case studies of the socio-economic costs of mines in different countries, and analyses of the limited military utility and negative impact of mines on U.S. soldiers in past wars.

7) The issue is framed as a humanitarian crisis, rather than an arms control issue. Consistently stating—and demonstrating—that the humanitarian impact of mines outweighs any possible national security/military benefit is perhaps the central key to the campaign's success.

—L.L. □

Ban on *Illicit* Arms Complements "Code of Conduct" on *Legal* Trade

The illicit and licit arms markets drive each other, as the ability of insurgent groups to acquire arms usually spurs demand for weapons by government forces, and repressive militaries often give rise to insurgencies. A comprehensive approach to reducing the likelihood and lethality of internal warfare must address both markets.

For several years, FAS has worked with a coalition of over 100 human rights, refugee relief, weapons control and religious organizations to enact a "code of conduct" for U.S. arms exports. The code would bar transfers to repressive or aggressive regimes, unless the President certifies that it is in the national security interest to export arms to such a government. A concerted, global effort to staunch the flow of arms to insurgents should reduce the perceived need by the U.S. and other governments to arm repressive regimes for "national security" reasons.

House Passes Code

In mid-June this campaign took a major step forward when the House of Representatives included the "Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers" in the State Department authorization act (H.R.1757). The Senate passed its version of the State Department bill a few days later without taking action on the code. Later this summer, a House-Senate conference committee will resolve differences between the two bills. The arms industry opposes the measure and is pressing conferees to drop it. In its lead editorial on June 20, the *New York Times* urged the conferees to maintain the code, which the paper called an "entirely sensible" idea.

In the recent past, American arms have often supported undemocratic or abusive regimes, thereby contributing to the rise of armed insurgent movements and the outbreak of conflict (*see case study on Turkey, next page*). In several instances, previously-transferred American arms have been turned on U.S. forces or allies (e.g., in Haiti, Iran, Panama, and Somalia).

Transfers to these governments were made in the context of the Cold War, but as Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, a California Republican and former speech writer for President Reagan, said on the House floor on June 10: "The Cold War is over. It is time for us to have a new code of conduct that puts democracy and human rights ahead of a fast buck in selling weapons to the dictators around the world who repress people and violate the very principles which this country is supposed to be all about."

The code of conduct establishes four eligibility criteria which governments must meet in order to import American arms: democratic form of government; respect for internationally-recognized norms of human rights; non-aggression against neighboring states; and participation in the U.N. Register of Conventional Arms. These standards are hallmarks of stable, responsible governments and central tenets of this and previous administrations' stated foreign policies. Yet, while the Clinton State Department has touted democracy as a centerpiece of its foreign policy, the majority of U.S. arms exports continue to go to states where people are unable to choose their government and/or suffer abuse for trying to obtain the same basic freedoms Americans enjoy.

Undemocratic or repressive governments are by their very nature unstable. To ensure that America's arms do not again outlast its alliances, careful consideration should be given before weapons transfers proceed to such regimes. By writing these four criteria into U.S. law, the code of conduct will bring balance to a review process currently weighted toward short-term economic, strategic and diplomatic considerations.

Opponents of such a policy often claim that other governments will simply step in to fill a sales vacuum left by a unilateral U.S. code of conduct. However, the new British Labor government has announced support for a similar UK code of conduct, and the European Union is pursuing a Europe-wide code. In May, 15 Nobel Peace Laureates kicked off a campaign for a global code of conduct on the arms trade. —L.L. □



Rep. Cynthia McKinney, principal Congressional sponsor of the U.S. Code of Conduct, speaking on May 30. Behind her are (l-r): Elie Wiesel, the Dalai Lama, Oscar Arias, and Jose Ramos-Horta, four of 15 Nobel Peace Laureates who have initiated an international Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers.

(Photo by Larry Barns)

Turkey: A Case Study Both for "Code" and Black Market Curbs

In early May I traveled to Ankara, Turkey to attend a peace conference on Turkey's 13-year long war with Kurdish guerrillas in the southeastern part of the country. This tragic struggle, which has taken over 20,000 lives—many of them civilians, well demonstrates the need for both a "code of conduct" on arms exports to the Turkish government, as well as curbs on the illicit market sustaining the guerrillas' fighting.

For several years, FAS has sought to limit and condition American arms exports to Turkey due to that country's abysmal human rights record. The litany of abuses—well documented by non-governmental and governmental monitors—includes the widespread use

of torture, "disappearance" of thousands of journalists, intellectuals, and activists, and indiscriminate military attacks on civilian populations. These abuses center around the war against the Kurdish insurgents, known as the PKK, but include many repressive measures aimed at the general Kurdish population, as well.

Unfortunately, at the behest of the military-dominated Turkish National Security Council, the government banned the peace conference two days before it was to open. The banning order said that the meeting threatened "the indivisible integrity of the state," a clear reference to the aspirations of some of Turkey's Kurds to have an independent homeland. This was

The Kurds in Turkey

The Kurds are a large and distinct ethnic minority in the Middle East, numbering some 25-30 million people. The area that they have inhabited—referred to on maps for centuries as "Kurdistan"—spans modern day Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Half of the Kurds reside in Turkey, where they comprise over 20 percent of the Turkish population.

Modern Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal (better known as Atatürk—"father of the Turks"), enacted a constitution 70 years ago which denied the existence of distinct cultural sub-groups in Turkey. As a result, any expression by the Kurds (as well as other minorities in Turkey) of unique ethnic identity has been harshly repressed. For example, until 1991, the use of the Kurdish language—although widespread—was illegal. To this day, any talk that hints of Kurdish nationalism is deemed separatism, and grounds for imprisonment.

The Turkish government has consistently thwarted attempts by the Kurds to organize politically. Kurdish political parties are shut down one after another, and party members are harassed and imprisoned for "crimes of opinion." Most famously, in 1994 Leyla Zana—who, three years prior, had been the first Kurdish woman elected to the Turkish parliament—was sentenced to 15 years for "separatist speech." Her party was banned. More recently, in June the leaders of the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HADEP) were sentenced to several-year prison terms for allegedly having ties with the outlawed PKK guerrillas. The state prosecutors' evidence consisted largely of press releases found in the HADEP offices

from a news agency close to the PKK.

Adding to the grievances of Turkey's Kurds is the economic underdevelopment of the southeast. The Ankara government has systematically withheld resources from the Kurdish region. As a result, there are two distinct Turkeys: the northern and western regions are highly developed and cosmopolitan, part of the "first world," while the south and east are truly of the "third world."

The disparity and repression led to the formation of an armed separatist movement, the PKK, in 1984. While the majority of Turkey's Kurds do not openly support separatism from the Turkish state, many do support the PKK, as the only force fighting for broader Kurdish cultural, economic and political rights.

The state immediately responded to this threat with increased force, deploying some 300,000 troops in the southeast at an annual cost of \$8 billion. In addition, the Turkish armed forces instituted a system of "village guards," paying and arming Kurds to keep the PKK guerrillas out of their villages. Villages that refuse to participate in the guard system face demolition by the Turkish military, while those that go along suffer under harsh reprisals by the PKK.

The war escalated dramatically in the early 1990s. Between 1984-91, an estimated 2,500 people had been killed. Over the next four years, that figure shot up to 20,000. Some 3,000 villages have been destroyed by the military in an effort to rout out PKK sympathizers, creating more than 2 million refugees.

clearly not a goal of the conference, which, according to the invitation letter, sought to "silence the guns and seek through dialogue a solution that would allow both peoples [Turkish and Kurdish] to live in peace within the same state, with due respect for each other's identity and culture." The conference planners invited the participation of all the legal Turkish political parties, as well as professional organizations and human rights groups.

Despite the banning order, several dozen international participants came to Ankara and held a series of informal meetings. At the state-run hotel where the conference was to have taken place, we were met by a phalanx of security police, who monitored us and filmed our activities for the next three days.

The U.S. Position on Peace

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns, when questioned about the banning of the peace conference, said the U.S. Government "strongly back[s] the objective of this conference.... We regret very much the decision by the Turkish Government.... [W]e think that that kind of open dialogue builds cooperation."

Official U.S. policy supports a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish "problem"—code for Turkey's repressive policies toward the general Kurdish population. But the administration in no way encourages Turkey to negotiate an end to the war with the PKK guerrillas, whom the State Department has labeled as "vicious terrorists." The PKK has committed many abuses against Turkish civilians, principally Kurdish Turks cooperating with the military. But the U.S. government's rigid opposition to a negotiated end to this war is inconsistent with its past support for peace talks in other conflicts where both sides were guilty of abuses (e.g., El Salvador, Guatemala). Moreover, an end to the political repression of the general Kurdish population is unlikely while the war continues.

America is Turkey's Principal Military Backer

The United States has long been Turkey's principal military backer. Since 1984, when the war began, successive administrations have given the Turkish military \$6 billion in "security assistance" to buy American-made weapons. In addition, the U.S. has provided Turkey with hundreds of free surplus tanks, artillery, armored personnel carriers and attack helicopters from Pentagon stocks. Congress is currently considering the Clinton Administration's request of

over \$220 million in military loans, cash transfer, and military training for Turkey next year.

In a 1995 report, the State Department acknowledged that "U.S.-origin equipment...has been used in operations against the PKK during which human rights abuses have occurred. It is highly likely that such equipment was used in support of the evacuation and/or destruction of villages." Despite this finding, the arms flow continues largely unabated. The State Department did, however, hold back last year on a sale of 10 "Super Cobra" attack helicopters to Turkey, largely because of concerns that Congress would not support the deal. This helicopter had been specifically identified by the State Department in indiscriminate attacks on villages.

The rationales for close U.S. military ties with Turkey are manifold. During the Cold War, the U.S. establishment supported arms and aid to Turkey in order to strengthen its membership in NATO and thwart communist expansion. Since 1991, arms transfers have been justified as necessary to counter aggression from "rogue states" bordering Turkey—Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Such aggression is highly improbable, given that Turkey is a member of NATO, and an attack against it would result in a collective response. Moreover, it is Turkey which has repeatedly invaded northern Iraq in the past several years, in assaults on PKK guerrilla camps and Iraqi Kurdish villages. Turkish military spokesmen have hinted that assaults on Syrian and Iranian territory might be necessary, if those countries don't cease providing support and shelter to PKK fighters.

The "Islamic Threat"

Some arms-sales-to-Turkey proponents hint darkly that if the United States restricts the weapons flow, the U.S. might "lose Turkey," a reference to the growing role of Islamic political parties. Testifying in March, Secretary of Defense William Cohen scolded Congress for holding up the sale of major weapons systems to Turkey, suggesting that such actions could strengthen anti-Western Islamic factions. The logic, let alone the wisdom, of such claims is far from clear. The main Islamic party, Refah, gained strength in Turkey during a time of unrestricted U.S. arms supply. In fact, the 1995 election which brought Refah to power occurred just weeks after a major sale by the United States of 120 Army Tactical Missile Systems. The sale (the first ever export of this short-range ballistic missile) was timed to bolster Washington's favorite—Tansu

Ciller—in the elections, but it failed to do so.

Another principal rationale given for weapons aid is that, although about 97 percent of the population is Islamic, Turkey is a “secular democracy” and a model for other Muslim-dominated states in the region. Of late, however, the defense of secularism has come at the expense of democracy in Turkey.

Features of Democracy Lacking

Elections are held in Turkey but, as has been made clear by recent events, the government serves at the pleasure of the military, and not *vice versa*. In mid-June the military pressured the elected Islamic-party Prime Minister into resigning by threatening a coup if he did not curb certain policies immediately. Largely cosmetic reforms that Refah sought to implement (*e.g.*, allowing—not compelling—women to wear headscarves to government jobs) were viewed as signs of the impending de-secularization of Turkey and, therefore, as justification for the military to short-circuit democracy in Turkey.

Features of democracy taken for granted in America simply do not exist in Turkey. Public speech is controlled, as evidenced by the closure of our conference, and the heavy police surveillance of those who came to attend it. In addition, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, more journalists were killed or imprisoned in Turkey last year than in any other country. Human rights monitoring organizations are shut down, and dozens of human rights workers have been murdered. Many Kurdish parliamentarians have been imprisoned in recent years for “crimes of opinion”; others have fled into exile.

Turkish NGOs Active But Under Fire

The local host of the “non-conference” was the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD in Turkish), a nation-wide membership organization, with 16,000 members in 48 chapters. The association documents abuses in the war in the southeast, as well as elsewhere in the country, in a monthly bulletin. The government has closed down 18 of its chapters—including all of its branches in the southeast—and recently instituted proceedings to shut down IHD’s Ankara headquarters.

While in Ankara, I visited the offices of the Foundation for the Research of Societal Problems (TOSAV in Turkish), a promising new NGO initiative launched by Doğu Ergil, a professor of political science at Ankara University. Throughout 1996, Ergil brought together a handful of establishment Turks and Kurds to

discuss reconciliation and resolution of the Kurdish crisis. The two sides were eventually able to reach agreement on many points about the root causes of the conflict, and on political reform, peace, and economic development measures necessary to address those root causes. The publication of this consensus document in Turkey was quite extraordinary, and Ergil was measuredly optimistic: Two years ago, he said, the subject of Kurdish-Turkish peace was taboo, and he would not have been able to open his foundation.

Given the high level of sensitivity in Turkey to outside pressure on human rights (especially around the Kurdish war), I asked how concerned foreigners could most constructively engage the issue. He suggested that we focus on disarmament and demilitarization of both the Turkish military and the PKK insurgents, rather than just the military, because the military is widely supported in Turkey. “An attack on the beloved army [alone] will be seen as an attack on the state,” he said.

Black Market Arms the PKK

The PKK has apparently had little difficulty finding weapons. In January of this year, the leader of the insurgency, Abdullah Ocalan, spoke of an international arms supply network that extends “from Afghanistan to Central Europe.” He added that PKK arms purchases occur in Istanbul, as well.

In May, the PKK shot down two Turkish military helicopters in northern Iraq using Russian-made shoulder-launched missiles. U.S. intelligence reportedly has identified organized crime networks in Russia, as well as smugglers in Poland and Bulgaria, as the likely source of supply. These networks have reportedly sent small shipments of 150-200 weapons at a time—including small arms, assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and anti-aircraft missiles—through two principal routes, one along Turkey’s northeastern border on the Black Sea, and the other on the Bulgarian border in Thrace.

The Turkish military routinely accuses neighbors with whom it has bad relations of supporting the PKK. A Turkish military spokesman recently named Syria, Greece, Cyprus, and Armenia as suppliers of weapons and training to the insurgents. All have denied the allegation.

Following two days of meetings in Ankara, I traveled with several other “non-conference” participants for three days in and around Diyarbakir, the largest city in the Kurdish region. A road sign leading

in to the city stated the population at about 400,000, but the city, swollen with refugees from near-by demolished villages, is estimated at about 1.5 million.

The Southeast

The differences from Ankara are striking from the moment you step off the plane. First of all, the airport cohabits with a military aircraft base. Soldiers in camouflage patrol the runway with assault rifles, while armed and armored jeeps drive by. Military and police are omni-present inside the terminal.

Murat Bozlak, the chairman of HADEP (the main Kurdish political party), arrived in Diyarbakir on our flight. A crowd, reportedly 30,000 people strong, gathered to welcome him home from an Ankara prison, where he had been held since June 1996. Bozlak and many other party members were arrested following a party congress, when a HADEP "supporter" took down the Turkish flag and put up the PKK flag in its place. The man has recently confessed to being an *agent provocateur* in the pay of the police.

We waited patiently for the parade of supporters to leave the airport. I shared a taxi to the hotel with a Kurdish speaker, who was able to talk with our driver. We asked whether life in this city had improved recently, under the Refah (Islamic) government, in particular. He emphatically said no, that Refah—as with all of the major political parties—were out for themselves, that they were not developing the economy in the Kurdish part of the country. Our driver openly expressed strong Kurdish nationalist sentiments.

A group—comprised of nationals from Germany, France, Russia and America—set out to reach the



Supporters of Kurdish political leader Murat Bozlak, recently released from jail, on his return to Diyarbakir in mid-May. He was subsequently convicted of support for the illegal PKK.

village of Tepe, in Diyarbakir province. According to local human rights workers, the village had been blockaded for the past two months by Turkish military forces in reprisal for the PKK murder of a State-paid village guard. No food or medicine was allowed in, and no people were allowed out. We were turned back at a paramilitary checkpoint "for security reasons."

We then headed to Mardin, about 90 km south of Diyarbakir. The decade-long state of emergency which has existed in all nine southeastern provinces was recently lifted in Mardin, the area having been thoroughly "pacified." Nevertheless, Mardin still has a large military presence. We ate at a restaurant on the main street which displayed a sign saying that it was approved (by the local authorities) for soldiers to eat there. Sitting at tables all around us were boy-soldiers in camouflage, guns slung over their shoulders.

We caught a bus to a small town, Kiziltepe, a couple kilometers further south, near the Syrian border. We stopped for a drink, and the proprietor and several other men joined us. They were all refugees from surrounding villages that had been destroyed by the Jandarma, a paramilitary police force, several years prior. There was quite a bit of construction going up, and I asked who the housing was for. The police and military, they replied.

We were escorted to a refugee community. The houses were built out of concrete blocks, mud, bricks, tin. There was no water or electricity. We met a 40-ish man who invited us into his courtyard for tea. A brood of children loitered around shyly, and his wife came up and welcomed me with a kiss on each cheek. She spoke no Turkish, as is the case with many Kurdish women. Several other men joined us. They spoke freely about politics and about their difficult lives. Our host told me that he had eight children and was not able to send any of them to school. The oldest, a boy ten years old, must work to help the family stay afloat.

The next day the delegation was flying back to Ankara. After going through the thorough inspection and body search required when leaving Diyarbakir, we boarded the jet. We waited for a long while on the runway in the sweltering heat. Finally the stewardesses allowed the restive passengers to disembark back into the airport. A squadron of bombers flew in, and we eventually flew out.

Two days later the Turkish military launched a major cross-border assault on PKK fighters based in northern Iraq. As of this writing, a month and a half later, Turkish troops are still in Iraq. —L.L. □

Mexico: A Case Study of Arms Trafficking

The chief of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency testified recently that drug cartels now rival the government for control in many regions of Mexico. Increasingly brazen, drug-traffickers killed more than 200 Mexican police last year, and they have assassinated many high-profile political figures, including the Cardinal of Guadalajara in 1993. Thousands of regular citizens are getting caught in the crossfire, as well: Mexico has one of the highest firearm homicide rates in the world, at about 10 for every 100,000 people.

For several years, the Mexican government has pointed out that the cartels (and other criminals) are getting their arms north of the border. Proximity, liberal gun sales laws and inadequate law enforcement, have made the United States Mexico's leading source of black-market arms.

There are nearly 25,000 federally-licensed gun sellers in the four U.S. states bordering Mexico; more than 6,000 sit along the border between the two countries. It is illegal for any U.S. person or company to export or conspire to export a weapon without obtaining a license from the government (either the Commerce or State Department, depending on the type of weapon), but annual reports by the Bureau on Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) International Traffic in Arms program indicate that smuggling arms out of the United States is not overly difficult. In 1994, foreign governments reported 6,238 unlawfully acquired U.S.-origin firearms to the BATF. Over half—3,376—were discovered in Mexico.

The "Ant Run"

Many of these weapons are trafficked by petty criminals looking for a quick buck. Such smugglers use a method known as the *hormiga* (ant) run—repeated trips across the border with one or a few guns. A legally eligible American resident, a "straw" purchaser, buys a few weapons (often cheap pistols) from gun stores in El Paso and other American border towns and hands them over to the trafficker, who smuggles them across the border, either on foot or in the trunk of a car.

Currently only three states—Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina—have laws that prevent people from buying more than one gun a month. In all other states, straw purchasers can buy significant quantities of guns and ammunition from gun dealers at one time and pass them on to smugglers for clandestine shipment. A 1991 BATF report describes a number of such transactions, including a 1989 case in which three

Arizona residents purchased 93 assault rifles and 22 handguns for a well known Mexican narcotics trafficker, who then smuggled them into Mexico.

Organized crime is also involved with this traffic. According to a report last fall by the Office of the Attorney General of Mexico, gun-running is the third richest source of profit for crime syndicates in Mexico, after drug trafficking and robbery/extortion. The report states that no criminal group has been found to be "strictly and exclusively dedicated to arms trafficking" but, rather, that drug trafficking organizations are running guns through the routes to and from the United States under their control. It cited flourishing gun/drug routes along the Pacific coast, the Gulf coast, and Central Baja and adds that a "significant" amount of arms trafficking originates out of central Florida, crossing through the Caribbean and entering Mexico through the Yucatan Peninsula. These professionals often traffic in AK-47, AR-15 and M-1 assault rifles.

Theft from Military Depots

Gun-runners also acquire arms from military and police facilities on both sides of the border. In 1993, the General Accounting Office (GAO) found that small arms parts were routinely stolen from a number of U.S. military repair shops and warehouses. The hot parts were then sold to gun dealers or to walk-in customers at gun shows around the United States. GAO investigators were able to purchase military small arms parts at 13 of 15 gun shows they visited, obtaining everything needed to convert a semiautomatic AR-15 rifle into a fully automatic M-16, as well as 30-round M-16 magazine clips still in their original packages. Some of these arms undoubtedly end up south of the border.

In Mexico, narco-traffickers and other criminals probably also get a substantial amount of U.S. arms from Mexican police and military depots, either through theft or purchases from corrupt state servants. In 1991, the Pentagon gave Mexico nearly 50,000 M-1 rifle carbines, and during 1989-93, the State Department approved 108 licenses for the export of over \$34 million in small arms to Mexico. The Department performed only three follow-up inspections to ensure non-diversion of these arms. During 1991-93, the Commerce Department approved an additional 34 licenses for the export of over \$3 million of shotguns and shells. End use checks are even rarer on Commerce-licensed arms.

—L.L. □

Bethe Urges a Halt to Work on "New Types" of Nuclear Weapons

Hans Bethe, the senior living Atomic Scientist of World War II, and the major spokesmen of atomic scientists for nuclear sanity during the Cold War, wrote the President, on April 25, urging that the weapons' laboratories be instructed not to engage in "creative work or physical or computational experiments on the design of new types of nuclear weapons . . . such as a pure fusion bomb."

For some months before Bethe's letter, FAS Fund Chairman Frank von Hippel had petitioned the White House and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency with related concerns described in a five-page background paper entitled "The Question of Pure Fusion Explosions Under a CTBT." His paper explained that small inertial-confinement fusion explosions ignited with lasers or particle accelerators were going to be permitted under the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). He expressed the concern that weapons labs were lobbying to expand the loophole to exempt other more weaponizable methods for ignition of fusion explosions. He warned that such research might lead to the creation of a fission-free neutron bomb.

Bethe's letter (sent to the President on FAS stationary) was carefully drafted to show that his appeal was consistent with the President's commitment to the Stockpile Stewardship program, to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Safeguards, and even a phrase in the 1994 Nuclear Posture Review. None of these, he argued, required work on *new types* of nuclear weapons.

The President's response of June 2 directly related to Dr. Bethe's appeal in this single sentence:

"By banning all nuclear explosions, the CTBT will constrain the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and end the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons."

This sentence, drawn from the preamble of the CTB Treaty itself, rests on the interpretation that no new type of nuclear weapon can be (fully) "developed" without testing prohibited by the Treaty. The President's letter, which received an interagency review, did not address Bethe's concern that such a new type of nuclear weapon might, nevertheless, be *invented*, and have its secret spread.

Professor Bethe's letter received excellent coverage in the *New York Times* (Science Section, May 27) and, later, was quoted in a long discussion of Bethe's work in the *New York Times* of June 17. Senator Daniel P. Moynihan put the latter *New York Times* article in the Congressional Record, along with the Bethe-Clinton exchange of letters.

Professor Bethe's letter was wholly consistent with, and informed by, his Atomic Scientist's Appeal, released in Hiroshima on July 25, which called on "all scientists in all countries to cease and desist from work creating, developing, improving and manufacturing further nuclear weapons--and, for that matter, other weapons of potential mass destruction such as chemical and biological weapons." (See FAS PIR of September/October 1995). For the material discussed above, see <http://www.fas.org/bethepr.htm>. □

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