United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Honorable
Dianne Feinstein, U.S. Senate

July 2000

CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS

U.S. Efforts to Control the Availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons

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Abbreviations

DOD Department of Defense

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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

National Security and
International Affairs Division

B-285207

July 18, 2000

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons in regions of conflict[1] is a matter of concern among governments and nongovernmental and international organizations. Small arms include pistols, revolvers, and machine guns, while light weapons include such items as grenade launchers and man-portable missiles.[2] Although it is impossible to estimate the quantity of small arms and light weapons in circulation worldwide, the international community believes that the availability of these relatively inexpensive weapons contributes to regional instability, facilitates crime, jeopardizes peacekeeping operations, and hinders economic development in conflict areas. U.S. government policy objectives on U.S. conventional arms transfers (that is, their sale, grant, lease, license, or loan through the Departments of State and Defense) are designed to meet legitimate defense needs of friends and allies, in support of U.S. national security and foreign policy interests. The policy objectives are also aimed at restraining arms transfers that may be destabilizing or threatening to regional peace and security. You expressed concern about U.S. small arms and light weapons transfers, both commercial and government to government, and steps being taken by the U.S. government to reduce their availability in areas of conflict.

As agreed with your office, this report provides information on (1) U.S. government monitoring and reporting policies regarding small arms and light weapons transfers, (2) the steps the U.S. government is taking at the

[1]Regions of conflict and post-conflict include such areas as sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans, and Central America.

[2]For the purposes of our review, we are using the United Nations' definition of small arms and light weapons. Small arms are those weapons manufactured to military specifications and designed for use by one person, whereas light weapons are those used by several persons working as a crew. Ammunition and explosives needed for small arms and light weapons are also included in the definition.

international level to address the availability of small arms and light weapons, and (3) lessons identified regarding weapon collection programs.

To address the report's objectives, we obtained documents and information from U.S. government agencies, such as the Departments of State, Defense, and the Treasury; international organizations such as the United Nations; and nongovernmental organizations such as the British American Security Information Council, the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, the Federation of American Scientists, Human Rights Watch, the International Peace Research Institute, the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and representatives of the firearms industry. We summarized data and other information from weapon collection studies and conducted analysis of agency reports submitted to Congress. In addition, a separate evaluation of the Department of Defense post-delivery review process for foreign military sales is being conducted to determine the sufficiency of the Department's monitoring process.[3] For a complete discussion of our scope and methodology, see appendix II.

Results in Brief

The U.S. government has guidance, procedures, and regulations for monitoring and reporting U.S. conventional arms transfers to foreign recipients, including small arms and light weapons. Both the Departments of State and Defense are responsible for monitoring U.S. conventional arms transfers. The Department of Defense has the principal responsibility for monitoring government to government arms transfers, while the State Department licenses and monitors commercial arms exports. The Departments' monitoring activities include reviewing proposed transfers to foreign recipients (pre-delivery checks) and verifying that recipients of U.S. conventional arms receive and/or use these weapons as intended (post-delivery checks). The Departments of State and Defense must notify Congress prior to conventional arms transfers, if such transfers either meet or exceed specific dollar thresholds, and provide an annual report on the aggregate dollar value and quantity of all conventional arms that have already been transferred to recipients.

[3]At the request of the Chairman, House Committee on International Relations, we are currently examining the Defense Department's end-use monitoring program for all U.S. government-to-government conventional arms transfers and expect to issue our report in late August 2000.

In response to the international concern about the availability of small arms and light weapons in areas of conflict, the U.S. government has taken the lead in (1) creating international standards for governments to prevent illicit small arms transfers, including helping to negotiate the first regional agreement designed to prevent and combat illicit firearms trafficking in the Western Hemisphere, (2) establishing mechanisms to govern small arms transfers, such as strengthening export control procedures and complying with arms moratoriums, (3) developing diplomatic initiatives with other nations and multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations and the European Union's "Statement of Common Principles on Small Arms and Light Weapons," and (4) helping other nations to destroy their excess weapons as the United States did in Liberia.

Case studies of weapon collection programs conducted in other countries, such as "buyback" programs, have identified lessons that could be applied by governments or nongovernmental and international groups to future programs' design. According to experts, these case studies show that a failure to adopt a comprehensive approach, including setting realistic goals and providing appropriate incentives, results in programs encountering implementation problems. Although Department of Defense officials recognize the need to incorporate these factors into their weapon collection programs, there currently is no department guidance concerning how to implement these lessons within Department-managed weapon collection programs.

This report recommends that the Department of Defense develop guidance, based on a comprehensive approach, for conducting future weapon collection programs. In written comments on a draft of this report, the Department generally agreed with the report's content and recommendation.

Background

According to a variety of government, international, and nongovernmental sources,[4] over the past few years there has been an increase in the

[4]These sources include statements and documents obtained from officials at U.S. agencies such as the Departments of State and the Treasury, international organizations such as the United Nations, and various nongovernmental organizations such as the British American Security Information Council, the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, the Federation of American Scientists, Human Rights Watch, the International Peace Research Institute, the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and others including representatives from the firearms industry and related organizations.

availability, accumulation, and uncontrolled transfer of small arms and light weapons. Although no universally accepted definition of small arms and light weapons currently exists, most experts agree that small arms are those weapons manufactured to military specifications and designed for use by one person (such as an AK-47 rifle), whereas light weapons are those used by several persons working as a crew (such as a man-portable missile system). Small arms and light weapons are readily available, cheap to acquire, and need minimal maintenance and training to operate. Moreover, the number and type of small arms and light weapons available, even within regions of conflict, are unknown.

A 1997 U.N. report states that the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons are closely related to the increased incidence of internal conflicts and high levels of crime and violence.[5] Since 1989, Africa has experienced more armed conflict than any other continent and is perhaps the region most affected by small arms and light weapons proliferation, according to the U.S. State Department. According to the U.N. report, ineffective governmental control, open borders, and the lack of resources and information inhibit the region's ability to contend with the small arms problem. Also, in Eastern Europe, the collapse of the former Soviet Union has led to the greater availability of small arms and light weapons outside of government control. In 1998, the Secretary of State stated that the uncontrolled flow of arms, ammunition, and explosives into tense areas of the world, particularly Africa, is a serious international problem and called for greater global efforts to restrain transfers of these items to regions of conflict.

The U.S. Conventional Arms Transfer Policy announced in February 1995 advocates promoting restraint, both by the United States and other suppliers, in transfers of conventional weapons that may be destabilizing or dangerous to international peace. At the same time, it provides for transfers that meet legitimate defense requirements of U.S. friends and allies, in support of U.S. national security and foreign policy interests.

[5]Report of the Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms as requested by the U.N. General Assembly and issued in August 1997.

Both direct commercial sales and government-to-government U.S. conventional arms transfers are controlled under U.S. law. The Arms Export Control Act[6] and the Foreign Assistance Act [7] establish licensing, monitoring, and reporting requirements for U.S. conventional arms transfers, which include small arms and light weapons. Under the authority of the Arms Export Control Act, the State Department, through its Office of Defense Trade Controls, issues export licenses for the commercial sale of munitions items.[8] This act also permits the Department of Defense (DOD) to transfer U.S. defense articles, services, and training to eligible foreign governments through its Foreign Military Sales program.

For fiscal years 1996 through 1998,[9] the United States authorized or delivered $3.7 billion in small arms and light weapons to 154 nations through direct commercial sales; foreign military sales; or other transfers, including grants and "drawdowns" from Department of Defense stocks.[10] In keeping with its conventional arms policy, the United States transferred most of its small arms and light weapons to its friends and allies, including Egypt, Germany, Israel, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. Such transfers ranged from ammunition and small caliber handguns to machine guns and Stinger missiles. (See app. I for more details on U.S. small arms and light weapons transfers for fiscal years 1996-98.) The United States is a major supplier of all types of conventional arms worldwide, according to government and nongovernmental sources. Most government and nongovernmental officials with whom we spoke, however, indicated that American small arms found in regions of conflict were primarily acquired illicitly or recycled from U.S. involvement in war, such as Vietnam.

[6]22 U.S.C. section 2751.

[7]22 U.S.C. section 2151.

[8]Munitions items are those designed, developed, configured, adapted, or modified solely for military applications.

[9]At the time of our review, complete fiscal year 1999 data was not available.

[10]If the President determines that an emergency exists that cannot be met under the Arms Export Control Act or any other authority, then he may direct the drawdown of U.S. defense articles, services, or training from DOD stocks. 22 U.S.C. section 2318

U.S. Government Monitoring and Reporting of U.S. Small Arms and Light Weapons Transfers

The U.S. government has guidance, procedures, and regulations for monitoring and reporting U.S. conventional arms transfers to foreign recipients, including small arms and light weapons. Both the Departments of State and Defense are responsible for monitoring U.S. conventional arms transfers. The Department of Defense has the principal responsibility for monitoring government-to-government arms transfers, while the State Department licenses and monitors commercial arms exports.[11] The Departments' monitoring activities include reviewing proposed transfers to foreign recipients (pre-delivery checks) and verifying that recipients of U.S. conventional arms receive and/or use these weapons as intended (post-delivery checks). The Departments of State and Defense must notify Congress prior to conventional arms transfers, if such transfers either meet or exceed specific dollar thresholds, and provide an annual report on the aggregate dollar value and quantity of all conventional arms that have already been transferred to recipients. Congress may not receive prior notification of small arms and light weapons transfers if their dollar values are lower than the established notification thresholds. In addition, the legislation does not require the executive branch to specifically identify which transfers include items classified as small arms and light weapons.

State's "Blue Lantern" Monitoring Program

Consistent with requirements in law, the State Department conducts monitoring of commercial weapon transfers to recipients of concern[12] in order to deter and detect violations of law. Specifically, under its "Blue Lantern" program, the State Department conducts pre- and post-delivery checks. State's program, as implemented by its Office of Defense Trade Controls, applies 20 specific criteria or "flags" to determine when the need for "end-use monitoring" (either or both pre- and post-delivery review) is needed. These criteria reflect concerns about (1) a customer (for example, the customer or purchasing agent is reluctant to provide foreign end-use or end-user information); (2) an end-user (for example, the requested equipment does not match the known requirements or current inventory of the foreign end-user); or (3) a shipment (for example, a private intermediary is involved in the export, particularly in sales involving major

[11]Also, the Commerce Department licenses and monitors most dual-use items—those items with both civilian and military uses.

[12]Recipients of concern include governments, suppliers, individuals, and so forth, whose cases are suspicious prior to the issuance of an export license or have a need to establish proof of appropriate end-use.

weapon systems, end-user, or shipper activities). In general, State Department officials, who specialize in certain commodities and have developed an institutional knowledge of firms and types of transactions that may be suspicious or in violation of U.S. export law, initiate "Blue Lantern" requests. These requests are generally used to verify end-users and are implemented by State and other officials at U.S. embassies.

DOD's Monitoring Program

A 1996 amendment to the Arms Export Control Act[13] established a program that requires, to the extent practicable, monitoring of U.S. arms transfers by providing "reasonable assurance" that recipients comply with U.S. government export control requirements regarding the use, transfer, and security of defense articles and services. As a result of the amendment, DOD reviewed State's "Blue Lantern" standards and determined that it had equivalent pre-delivery controls in place.

[13]Section 40A of the Arms Export Control Act was added by section 150 of Public Law 104-164 (110 Stat. 1436), codified at 22 U.S.C. section 2785.

DOD, however, concluded that additional standards were needed to monitor government-to-government transfers after their delivery. Consequently, DOD established five additional conditions to be used as standards for conducting post-delivery checks in its December 1996 end-use monitoring guidance. The additional standards call for conducting post-delivery reviews when (1) there is an indication that a recipient country has violated section 3 of the Arms Export Control Act[14] (for example, a retransfer of U.S.-provided defense items took place without U.S. government permission); (2) a recipient country develops substantial defense or other ties with countries whose interests are not compatible with those of the United States; (3) significant and unusual political or military upheaval is impending or has occurred in a recipient country; (4) countries unfriendly to the United States in the recipient's region are illicitly seeking U.S. equipment or support items of the type held by the end-user; or (5) substantial problems or weaknesses are found during a security survey of the recipient country conducted for a General Security of Military Information Agreement.[15] The one condition that requires DOD to conduct a mandatory post-delivery check occurs when the State Department reports to Congress a possible end-use or transfer violation under section 3 of the Arms Export Control Act. If one or more of the five conditions are suspected to have occurred, then DOD's Security Assistance Offices[16] located at U.S. embassies overseas are to conduct a post-delivery check.

[14]Under section 3, when the President (through the State Department) makes a determination that a possible end-use or retransfer violation may have occurred, he must then promptly provide a report to Congress. 22 U.S.C. section 2753(c)(2).

[15]To assure that the recipient government will protect classified military information in a manner equivalent to that provided by the United States itself, a General Security of Military Information Agreement is signed between the United States and the recipient country.

[16]Security Assistance Offices are located at U.S. embassies overseas and are responsible for end-use monitoring of U.S.-origin defense equipment and services. Such offices include all DOD personnel located in a foreign country with responsibilities for administering security assistance management functions.

Independent of these five standards, DOD through its Security Assistance Offices, conducts end-use checks of man-portable missile systems because DOD has a special requirement to monitor transfers of these systems. Man-portable missile systems include Stinger missiles and are considered light weapons.[17] In addition, the Security Assistance Offices conduct end-use checks of items transferred under the State Department's International Narcotics Control Program. Such items include small arms and light weapons.

Foreign Assistance Act Reporting Requirements

Under section 655 of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended,[18] the Departments of State and Defense are to submit an annual report to Congress on the aggregate dollar value and quantity of all defense articles and services, and military education and training authorized by the United States to other countries. Prior to the enactment of a 1999 law, State's reporting on direct commercial sales of conventional arms reflected only authorized exports, not actual shipments, whereas DOD provided actual delivery information on the sale, grant, or drawdown of such weapons to Congress. The Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001[19] mandates that exporters now provide shipment information to the State Department for inclusion in its reports.

[17]According to DOD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency, a worldwide baseline inventory, completed in December 1999, accounted for most, but not all, of the missiles and identified security concerns at some locations. DOD is investigating to reconcile these discrepancies.

[18]22 U.S.C. section 2415.

[19]The full name of the act is the Admiral James W. Nance and Meg Donovan Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001, Public Law 106-113, App. G, 113 Stat. 1501A-405.

Arms Export Control Act Reporting Requirements

Under section 36 of the Arms Export Control Act, DOD is required to notify Congress about sales of major defense equipment,[20] defense articles,[21] or services[22] to foreign countries and international organizations, when those sales exceed certain cost thresholds.[23] Similarly, the State Department must notify Congress of any license to export major defense equipment, defense articles or services the cost of which exceeds established thresholds.[24] Congressional notification requirements established under this section rarely capture small arms and light weapons transfers, as few have large enough dollar values to trigger the notification requirements. However, there are exceptions. When some transfers of small arms and light weapons, such as Tow and Stinger missile systems, fall within the range of the established notification dollar values, then Congress is notified of such transfers.

Under section 3 of the Arms Export Control Act, if the President (through the State Department) makes a determination that a possible end-use or transfer violation may have occurred, he must then provide a report to Congress. Between June 1975 and January 1999, 39 reports based on possible section 3 violations were provided to Congress, including 7 involving small arms and light weapons. These seven reports cover eight small arms cases. In all eight cases, recipient countries failed to receive approval from the United States before transferring small arms-related defense articles to third parties. Of the eight cases, four provided an

[20]The Arms Export Control Act defines "major defense equipment" as any item of significant military equipment on the U.S. Munitions List having a nonrecurring research and development cost of more than $50 million, or a total production cost of more than $200 million. 22 U.S.C. section 2794(6).

[21]The Arms Export Control Act defines "defense article" broadly as including weapons, weapons systems, munitions or other implements of war; items used for the purposes of making military sales; items necessary for manufacturing, producing, or using any defense article; and any component or part of any defense article described. 22 U.S.C. section 2794(3).

[22]The Arms Export Control Act defines "defense service" as generally including any service, inspection, or technical or other assistance used for making military sales. 22 U.S.C. section 2794(4).

[23]The cost thresholds are: for an offer to sell major defense equipment, $1 million, and before an offer for sale is made, $14 million. For defense articles or services, $50 million before an offer for sale is made. 22 U.S.C. section 2776(a) and (b)(1).

[24]For licenses to export major defense equipment, $14 million; for defense articles or services, $50 million. 22 U.S.C. section 2776(c).

explanation of how such violations were resolved, while the remaining four failed to indicate the final outcomes.

Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001—Reporting Requirements

The Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001 mandates and requests additional reporting requirements for small arms and light weapons transfers and modifies current reporting on conventional weapons transfers. Specifically, the law requires the Secretary of State to submit a detailed report to Congress on various aspects of small arms proliferation by May 2000 and requests a report to Congress on the U.S. arms licensing process, including data on small arms licenses. To date, neither report has been submitted to Congress, but State has prepared a draft for the required report on small arms proliferation. Another provision of the law now requires exporters to report all shipment information to State for all items on the U.S. Munitions List (which include small arms and light weapons) 15 days after their export. Prior to the enactment of this law, State's reporting on direct commercial sales reflected only authorized exports, not actual shipments of items on the munitions list, as did DOD's reports to Congress. This new reporting provision is designed to address that problem.

U.S. Initiative for Global Small Arms and Light Weapons Transfers

The United States has developed an initiative intended to help promote security in regions of conflict. This initiative includes efforts to reduce illicit sales of small arms and light weapons; to improve, among other factors, the legal transparency (openness) of sales; to establish diplomatic initiatives; and to provide resources for weapon destruction programs.

U.S. Initiative to Address Small Arms Transfers

The U.S. initiative on small arms and light weapons is intended to help promote security in regions of conflict and close down illicit arms markets. Accordingly, the executive branch approach encompasses a number of wide-ranging measures to address the illicit transfers of small arms to regions of conflict. The Chairman of the executive branch interagency working group on small arms and firearms issues[25] summarized the U.S. government's initiative as four overarching steps, including the following:

[25]This interagency working group consists of representatives from a number of U.S. government agencies, including the State Department, DOD, and the Treasury.

- *Creating international standards to control illicit trafficking in small arms.* The Organization of American States' 1997 Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms[26] is designed to prevent, combat, and eradicate illicit trafficking in firearms, ammunition, and explosives in the Western Hemisphere. The United States played a leadership role in negotiating the convention, the first regional agreement to address the small arms issue. By the end of calendar year 2000, the United States hopes to have completed a global protocol that would build upon and globalize the standards set forth in the Organization of American States' Convention. Examples of such standards include (1) establishing licensing regimes, where needed; (2) developing common weapons marking and tracing practices; and (3) encouraging more transparent or open arms transfer practices.
- *Establishing mechanisms to govern small arms transfers.* The United States is encouraging other governments to strengthen export control procedures and enforcement for arms transfers and to comply with international arms moratoriums and embargoes. For instance, the United States wants other governments to be more transparent or open in monitoring and reporting their small arms exports so that baseline data can be collected to estimate small arms transfers worldwide. Another example is to have governments review all transfers and not approve transfers of weapons to conflict areas, such as the U.S. government does in the cases of Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.[27]
- *Establishing diplomatic initiatives.* The United States is working with multilateral organizations and other nations (such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Wassenaar Arrangement,[28] various African regional organizations, and Norway) to help address the proliferation of

[26]In November 1997, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States adopted the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

[27]In response to the problem of small arms trafficking in Africa, the United States also provided technical assistance to the small arms moratorium on the import, export, and manufacturing of small arms in West Africa.

[28]The Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls and Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies is comprised of 33 member states who seek, through their national policies, to ensure that arms transfers of these items do not contribute to the development or enhancement of military capabilities that undermine these goals.

small arms. For example, in December 1999, the United States and the European Union released a statement of "common principles" in which they pledged to observe restraint in their export policies and harmonize their export policies and procedures governing small arms. Both agree that a comprehensive approach—incorporating law enforcement, arms control, and security—is needed to address the small arms issue and recognize the importance of effective national controls for arms brokering and transparency measures with regard to small arms transfers.

- *Providing resources to help other countries destroy their excess weapons.* According to State Department officials, providing such assistance can play an important role in securing peace in regions of conflict. To this end, the U.S. government has already provided experts and monies to destroy small arms and light weapons in Liberia, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. For example, in Liberia, the U.S. government, along with other nations, provided $300,000 to help destroy some 18,000 weapons, including light mortars, grenades, and ammunition. To assist other states in weapon destruction projects, the State Department has requested $4.8 million in funding as part of its budget request for fiscal year 2001, but the request has not yet been funded.

The Secretary of State has said that although the United States is undertaking these measures to address the availability of small arms and light weapons in regions of conflict, the international community must develop an integrated and comprehensive response.[29] Consensus appears to be emerging within the international community over the causes and multifaceted impact of uncontrolled small arms and light weapons transfers and over responses needed, yet unresolved issues both at the domestic and international levels can hinder the achievement of U.S. goals. For example, government, nongovernment, and international sources have identified these problems:

[29]Remarks of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, made before the United Nations in September 1999.

- Definitional disagreements make consensus difficult concerning which types of arms to control. Differences exist between the terms "small arms and light weapons" and "firearms." The U.N. definition focuses on those weapons manufactured to military specifications and designed for personal use or use by several persons. The Organization of American States' definition of "firearms" is broader and refers to any barreled weapons that will or is designed to or may be readily converted to expel a bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive. This distinction between small arms and firearms also exists within the U.S. government.[30]
- The unknown scope of both legal and illicit small arms transfers makes designing effective responses difficult. Only limited transparency or openness exists over legal transfers.[31] According to government and nongovernment experts, increased openness is crucial for governments to monitor small arms exports and establish baseline estimates.
- While the United States helped to negotiate the Organization of American States' Convention, the first regional agreement to address the small arms and light weapons proliferation issue, the United States and other major signatories have not yet ratified the agreement.[32] Progress in reaching future agreements also involves resolving differences among foreign governments and nongovernmental organizations concerning the degree of regulation required for small arms transfers. Some supplier nations, particularly China, Russia, certain Eastern European states, and the U.S. domestic firearms industry and sporting organizations, have expressed concerns that restrictions not be overly stringent. In contrast, countries such as Canada and Norway and nongovernmental organizations involved with humanitarian and arms control issues are concerned that proposed measures will not be stringent enough.

[30]While DOD has compiled a specific listing of items it defines as small arms and light weapons, the State Department and the U.S. law enforcement community (that is, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms) apply the broader definition of firearms.

[31]The United States publicly reports detailed information on its transfers of conventional arms that include small arms and light weapons, through the Departments of Defense and State. The governments of Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have begun providing limited data on their small arms shipments.

[32]The President transmitted the Convention to the Senate in April 1998.

Weapon Collection Programs' Lessons

There have been a number of weapon collection programs implemented in various countries. Table 1 contains a listing of weapon collection programs that have been conducted in other countries. These programs are viewed as a way in which governments, communities, and individuals can reduce illegal and surplus weapons. Through such collection efforts, individuals and groups are encouraged to turn in weapons, usually for noncash incentives or, sometimes, for money. Local and national governments, nongovernmental groups, international groups, and the U.S. military in a variety of situations, including U.N. peacekeeping operations in Africa and Central America, and post-conflict situations in Panama and Haiti, have organized and conducted weapon collection programs. Judging the success of weapon collection programs is difficult and controversial because of the lack of knowledge about the total number of weapons available and the appropriate collection goal. According to State Department officials, experts involved with buyback programs admit that while such programs have symbolic value, they are not an especially effective or robust means of recovering weapons. Nevertheless, countries believe that the symbolic aspect of weapon buyback programs warrants their continuation.

Table 1: Examples of Weapon Collection Programs Conducted in Other Countries, 1995-99

Country	Sponsor	Date	Incentives offered	Weapons collected
Russia	Tatar government	September 1995	Cash	No information available
Philippines	Philippine Army	April 1996	Cash	81 high-powered war materials
Iran	Iranian government	September 1996	New firearms permits	200,000 unregistered weapons
Lesotho	Lesotho government	October 1996	Amnesty	No information available
Colombia	Colombian government	December 1996	Food vouchers	250 weapons
Taiwan	Taiwanese police	February 1997	Amnesty	780 weapons
Croatia	United Nations peacekeepers	February 1997	Cash	100,400 rifles; 253,000 antitank launchers; 6,271 grenades
Myanmar	Myanmar government	February 1997	Amnesty	Over 400 small and heavy weapons
Mozambique	Christian Council of Mozambique	March 1997	Goods and tools	800 guns and 24,000 armaments
El Salvador	Patriotic Movement Against Crime	March 1997 (Second phase of program started in 1996)	Vouchers redeemable for goods and food	Over 3,000 in 1996; Over 2,000 weapons in 1997

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Country	Sponsor	Date	Incentives offered	Weapons collected
Dominican Republic	Dominican government	April 1997	Amnesty	No information available
Croatia – Eastern Slovenia	United Nations Transnational Administration in Eastern Slovenia	August 1997	Cash	7,963 rifles and machine guns; 1,922 antitank rocket launchers, cannons, and surface-to-air missile launchers
Albania	Albanian government	August–September 1997	Amnesty	Over 5,000 weapons; 3,289 grenades
Australia	Australian government	September 1997	Cash	600,000 firearms
Central African Republic	Central African Republic government	October 1997	Amnesty	1,372 light and heavy weapons
El Salvador	Patriotic Movement Against Delinquency with assistance from the Organization of American States	February 1998 (continuation of program started in 1996)	Food coupons	Since 1996, 6,634 arms including pistols, rifles, and explosives collected
Nicaragua	Nicaraguan government with support from France, Canada, and Sweden	April 1998	Land	No information available
Albania	United Nations	January 1999	Development projects	6,000 small arms; 100 tons of ammunition

Sources: GAO summary of information obtained from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, the Institute for Security Studies, the United Nations, the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, and the British American Security Information Council.

Lessons Derived From Weapon Collection Programs

Experts from a variety of nongovernmental and international organizations[33] who have implemented and studied weapon collection programs in various countries have identified a number of lessons that could be learned from their experiences. For example, case studies of weapon collection programs demonstrate that a comprehensive approach, one that considers multiple factors (such as the economic, social, and cultural background of the area), and employs a number of key tasks such as (1) determining appropriate incentives and (2) establishing program goals and objectives tailored to the specific case, is essential. The experts who have studied weapon collection programs have concluded that, without such a comprehensive approach, weapon collection programs could encounter problems that might otherwise be avoided. These lessons have been compiled in a guide for small arms and light weapons collection, entitled *Tackling Small Arms and Light Weapons: A Practical Guide for Collection and Destruction.*[34] Table 2 summarizes 14 key tasks that these experts have concluded need to be considered when setting up a weapon collection program.

Table 2: 14 Key Tasks for Implementing Weapon Collection Programs

Task	Description
Conducting a feasibility assessment	The current economic, social, psychological, and cultural conditions in which weapons will be exchanged need to be assessed to determine whether it is feasible to implement a weapon collection program. Consideration should be given to factors such as community demographics, economic factors, levels of crime and violence, quality of law enforcement and judicial systems, the specific types of weapons causing the problem and the sources of supply, and the laws that govern the possession and use of small arms.
Establishing program goals and objectives	Realistic goals must be established at the outset so everyone is clear as to the objectives and for evaluation of the project. Selecting program objectives can be affected by several factors. First, various parties may agree to support the program in pursuit of different objectives. Second, objectives that participants say they are pursuing may be quite different from what they really hope to achieve. Third, objectives may be directly or indirectly related to weapons collection.

[33]Our sources include experts from the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, the Institute for Security Studies, the Monterey Institute of International Studies, the United Nations, and the British American Security Information Council.

[34]This is a joint publication of the Program on Security and Development at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, February 2000.

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Task	Description
Integrating the weapon collection program with other programs	To increase the likelihood that the program will accomplish its primary goals and objectives, they should be integrated and coordinated with other programs that address not only reducing the number and visibility of weapons but also the larger aims of human security and development.
Choosing appropriate incentives	One of the keys to a successful weapon collection program is providing the appropriate incentives for those citizens who will voluntarily turn in their weapons. They must be incentives that do not detract from the program's goals or create additional problems. Examples include vouchers for food, clothing, and other goods needed by the population; tools for trades or agriculture; and cash.
Organizing a weapon collection program	A weapon collection program can be organized in any number of ways, including (1) local government in collaboration with local civil society groups including the private sector; (2) local civil society groups with the assistance of local and/or national governments, especially the police or military to receive and destroy weapons; and (3) national government in collaboration with civil society groups- local, national, or international.
Considering legal factors	It is necessary to understand the current laws and regulations in the area where the weapon collection program is to be conducted. In some countries or provinces, providing an amnesty requires amending existing statutes or even constitutions. In others, carrying firearms in public may be prohibited, and regulations must be amended or suspended to allow people to participate in the program.
Establishing the types of weapons to be collected	Based on the feasibility assessment and program objectives, planners must decide which types of weapons can and should be turned in. Factors to be considered are the weapons' lethality or destructiveness, their perceived proliferation or pervasiveness, the risk of improper use or harm to untargeted people or objects, and the specific individuals or groups that are supposed to hand in weaponry.
Obtaining funding and support	Weapon collection programs are most likely to succeed when they enjoy strong support across the political spectrum. Depending on the size, scale, and geographic scope of a specific program, resources are needed for compensating staff; renting facilities; arranging transportation, incentives, publicity, and promotion; and providing storage. In many cases, resources are obtained from a mix of cash and material contributions or offset by volunteers.
Selecting an appropriate location	A clear delineation of the area of the weapon collection program is critical. Making clear who is in charge and who is eligible to participate will avoid problems of intermediaries and weapons traders coming to the program from outside the community. The site for a program should most often be a location other than a military base or police station. Especially in communities where the police are not trusted and/or for those programs that hope to collect illegal weapons, alternate venues are preferable.
Determining the length and timing	The duration of a weapon collection program is dependent on many factors, including the amount of funds raised, the size of the program, the expectations of organizers, and the logistical realities. Programs can range from 1 day to 1 year or more. Sometimes these programs are annual events. Timing is important, because most weapon collection programs occurred in post-conflict situations such as in Haiti and Panama or after a shocking incident involving the use of weapons. There should be a clear deadline.
Attracting publicity	Publicity is key to maximizing the number of participants and therefore the number and types of weapons turned in. This is especially true for programs in which one of the primary objectives is to increase awareness regarding gun violence and mishaps due to improperly stored or secured firearms in the home. All types of media-print, television, radio, and Internet (if existing and appropriate) - should be utilized, with the focus on that forum to which the majority of the people in the community have access.

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Task	Description
Developing weapon turn-in procedures	Even when the types of weapons to be accepted in a particular program are established, care should be taken to make sure that all weapons are operable and unloaded. Even in the case of amnesty and anonymity, serial numbers should be recorded before destruction. A qualified technical person should be present at all times.
Establishing destruction plans and process	In many instances, weapon collection programs include a destruction component to dispose of the weapons collected. This can be done to prevent the weapons turned in from recirculating and to provide evidence of this to the program participants and collaborators. A program can handle the destruction of weapons in a variety of ways. In all cases, the weapon should be documented as to type, serial number, condition, etc.
Evaluating the program	By their nature, weapon collection programs are very high profile and can be controversial. The citizens of the community, the governments involved, and the sponsors and funders will all demand to know the results of the program. Therefore, the evaluation component of the program must be part of the initial plan. In this section of the plan, documentation is developed for both auditing and evaluation purposes.

Source: Tackling Small Arms and Light Weapons: A Practical Guide for Collection and Destruction (Program on Security and Development by the Monterey Institute of International Studies and the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, Feb. 2000).

DOD Weapon Collection Programs in Panama and Haiti

DOD, through the U.S. Army, has conducted weapon collection programs in Panama and Haiti. During Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama in 1989 and 1990, the U.S. Army used a "money for weapons" incentive designed to affect the confiscation of unauthorized weapons. Over 10,000 rifles, shotguns, pistols, and grenades were turned in at a cost of over $1 million. According to army after-action reports, however, commanders in the field believed the buyback program had limited success because the local civilian population was already turning in large numbers of weapons before the program went into effect. Afterwards, the local population turned in a few weapons at a time in order to collect more reward money. Commanders also felt that many of the weapons turned in were not the type of weapons that they were seeking. The after-action report on the Panama operation recommended that in future weapon collection efforts, more consideration should be given to whether a money for weapons program is actually feasible.

The U.S. Army's experience in Haiti was similar to its experience in Panama. U.S. Army commanders who were involved with the planning and execution of the gun buyback program during the 1994-95 Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti told us that the program was ineffective. The goals of the program were to (1) reduce the number of weapons, (2) promote stability, and (3) provide monetary incentives to Haitian citizens who supported the program. According to the after-action report on the Haiti operation, a total of 9,915 items, including 3,389 weapons, were

purchased by the United States at a total cost of $1.8 million. U.S. Army commanders have said the program was a "dismal failure" in reducing the number of weapons and achieving a secure and stable environment. The weapons turned in were old and unusable and not the type of weapons that could be used against U.S. and other multinational forces. U.S. Army commanders have identified several sources for the shortfalls in the program. First, there were no initial goals for the number of arms to collect. Second, while information provided by higher headquarters indicated there were large numbers of weapons in the military and civilian population, such a level of weapons was not seen. Finally, no assessment of the social, cultural, and political environment was done prior to the inception of the buyback program. According to U.S. Army commanders, a weapon buyback effort should be considered only after the ground commander does such an assessment to determine the program's feasibility or is provided reliable current assessments from higher headquarters. They suggested that a 30- to 60-day evaluation period would be appropriate to determine whether a weapon buyback program would be viable.

Use of Lessons by DOD

DOD has recognized the need to incorporate lessons it has identified into its weapon collection or buyback programs. U.S. Army commanders and other Army officials who were involved with weapon collection programs in Panama and Haiti concluded that a comprehensive approach looking at a variety of economic, social, and cultural factors is needed for the conduct of a successful weapon collection program. Specific factors the commanders and officials identified to help assure a successful weapon collection program include (1) conducting a feasibility assessment, (2) setting realistic goals for each program, and (3) providing appropriate incentives. Current U.S. military doctrine or field manuals provide no guidance in this area. The U.S. Army Center for Lessons Learned proposed that doctrine and procedures be incorporated into DOD guidance for weapon collection programs; however, DOD has no immediate plans to do so.

Conclusion

Current U.S. military doctrine and field manuals provide no guidance on conducting weapon collection programs. Based on the experiences of the U.S. Army in conducting buyback programs in Panama and Haiti and the studies conducted of weapon collection programs worldwide, DOD lacks procedures for conducting such programs in post-conflict areas.

Recommendation

To more effectively conduct weapon collection programs in the future, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct that guidance, based on a comprehensive assessment and approach, be developed for implementing weapon collection programs.

Agency Comments

In written comments on a draft of this report, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency of the Department of Defense generally agreed with the report's content and recommendation. The agency stated it would examine the requirement for involvement in weapon collection programs and promulgate guidance as appropriate. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Department of State, also provided written comments and generally agreed with the contents of the report. Department of Defense and State written comments are reprinted in their entirety as appendixes III and IV, respectively. The Department of the Treasury chose not to provide comments on the report. The Customs Service, the Department of Defense, and the Department of State provided technical comments that were incorporated as appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees and the Honorable William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense; the Honorable Madeline K. Albright, Secretary of State; the Honorable Lawrence H. Summers, Secretary of the Treasury; and Raymond W. Kelly, Commissioner of the U.S. Customs Service. Copies will be made available to others upon request.

If you have any questions concerning this report, please call me at (202) 512-4128 or Boris L. Kachura, Assistant Director, at (202) 512-3161.

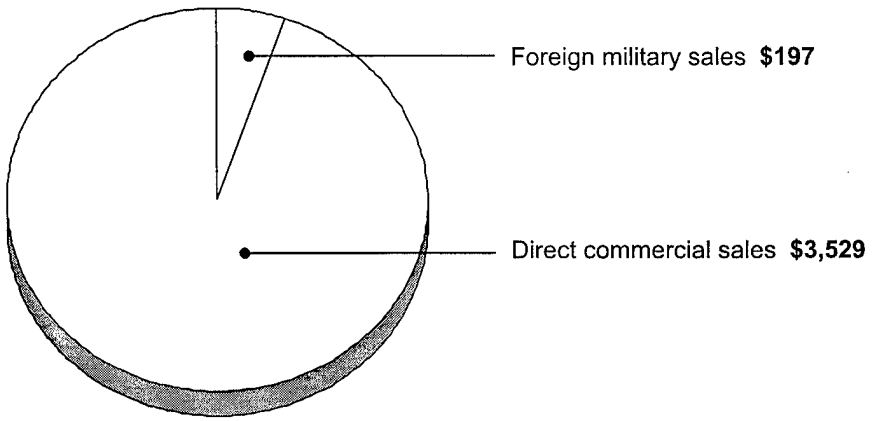
Sincerely yours,

Harold J. Johnson, Associate Director
International Relations and Trade Issues

U.S. Small Arms and Light Weapons Transfers, Fiscal Years 1996-98

For fiscal years 1996 through 1998, the United States authorized or delivered[1] $3.7 billion in small arms and light weapons to 154 nations through direct commercial sales, foreign military sales, or other transfers, including grants and drawdowns. Consistent with its arms policy, the United States transferred most of these items to its friends and allies including Egypt, Germany, Israel, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. Such small arms and light weapons transfers ranged from ammunition and small caliber handguns to machine guns and Stinger missiles. Figure 1 shows the dollar values for direct commercial sales and foreign military sales, including grants and drawdowns, of small arms and light weapons for fiscal years 1996-98. Tables 3 illustrates the top 25 recipient countries (based on the dollar value) of U.S. small arms and light weapons transfers (authorized direct commercial sales and delivered foreign military sales combined) for fiscal years 1996-98.

Figure 1: Dollar Value of U.S. Small Arms and Light Weapons Authorized or Delivered for Fiscal Years 1996-98
Dollars in millions



Source: GAO summary and analysis of data provided by the Departments of Defense and State.

[1]Authorized refers to the approved licenses for direct commercial sales approved by the State Department and delivered refers to the actual deliveries provided by the Defense Department through foreign military sales. As discussed earlier in the report, the Foreign Relations and Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001 addresses this reporting difference between the Departments by mandating that exporters now provide actual shipment information to the Department of State.

Table 3: Top 25 Recipients of U.S. Small Arms and Light Weapons Authorized or Delivered for Fiscal Years 1996-98

Recipient country	Total	Authorized direct commercial sales	Delivered foreign military sales
Japan	$621,377,579	$621,377,579	0
United Kingdom	548,267,268	548,201,182	$66,086
Israel	257,053,723	234,983,364	22,070,359
Germany	247,643,469	247,387,806	255,663
Saudi Arabia	167,679,235	154,967,890	12,711,345
Norway	122,101,526	122,101,526	0
Sweden	105,013,927	105,013,927	0
Taiwan	100,158,877	68,818,003	31,340,874
Belgium	96,580,420	96,580,420	0
Egypt	90,073,176	33,607,413	56,465,763
Australia	84,573,761	84,548,707	25,054
Switzerland	81,398,677	81,398,677	0
Venezuela	76,311,076	76,311,076	0
South Korea	73,163,814	73,142,502	21,312
France	70,382,532	70,382,532	0
Italy	70,036,440	69,843,769	192,671
Philippines	68,535,982	66,353,287	2,182,695
Thailand	64,224,312	61,065,684	3,158,628
Turkey	59,746,809	52,349,950	7,396,859
Netherlands	58,447,275	52,780,257	5,667,018
Mexico	48,749,506	48,749,506	0
Spain	47,858,498	46,652,154	1,206,344
Argentina	47,065,049	47,028,839	36,210
Greece	41,260,888	34,086,501	7,174,387
Brazil	33,487,195	26,461,544	7,025,651

Source: GAO summary and analysis of data provided by the Departments of Defense and State.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

At the request of Senator Diane Feinstein, we obtained information on (1) U.S. government monitoring and reporting policies regarding small arms and light weapons transfers, (2) the steps the U.S. government is taking at the international level to address the availability of small arms and light weapons, and (3) lessons identified regarding weapon collection programs.

To obtain information on how the U.S. government monitors small arms and light weapons transfers, we reviewed legislation, including the Foreign Assistance Act, Arms Export Control Act, and applicable U.S. regulations and guidance. We interviewed officials from the Department of the Treasury, including the U.S. Customs Service, and visited the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms' Gun Tracing Center in West Virginia. We met with officials and obtained documents from the Department of State, specifically the Office of Defense Trade Controls that implements State's "Blue Lantern" end-use monitoring program. Specifically, we obtained data on pre- and post-delivery checks for small arms and light weapons transfers conducted under the Blue Lantern program for fiscal years 1997-99. We also met with officials and obtained documents from the Defense Department's Defense Security Cooperation Agency, which is responsible for the Department's end-use monitoring program. Through the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, we queried Security Assistance Offices at 22 U.S. posts overseas via the Internet to obtain information on the extent of their end-use monitoring activities and procedures for government to government transfers of small arms and light weapons. Specifically, we contacted the posts in Bolivia, Brazil, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Morocco, the Netherlands, Oman, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, and Turkey. We selected the posts in those countries that were the recipients of U.S. small arms and light weapons transfers for fiscal years 1996-98. We received written responses from all of the posts contacted except for Morocco.

To identify executive branch reporting requirements for small arms and light weapons, we reviewed legislation including the Foreign Assistance Act, the Arms Export Control Act, and the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001. We obtained and reviewed various documents, including reports and notification letters from the State Department and the Department of Defense that are required under the Arms Export Control Act and the Foreign Assistance Act. For fiscal years 1996 through 1998, we compiled our own database for U.S. transfers (authorized and delivered) of small arms and light weapons based on State

and Department of Defense reports, required under section 655 of the Foreign Assistance Act, and other documents. In compiling the database of U.S. small arms and light weapons transfers, we defined small arms and light weapons primarily based on the United Nations' definition. State and Defense officials, however, provided us with separate, detailed lists of those items that each defines as small arms and light weapons.

To determine what is known about the extent of small arms and light weapons transfers and the steps the U.S. government is taking to address such transfers, we met with and acquired information from various international, governmental, and nongovernmental officials from the United Nations; the Departments of Defense, State, and the Treasury; the Central Intelligence Agency; the Federation of American Scientists; Human Rights Watch; the British American Security Information Council; the Monterey Institute of International Studies; the International Peace Research Institute; the Institute for Research on Small Arms in International Security; and representatives of the firearms industry and lobby. We also attended periodic meetings between the State Department and the nongovernmental organizations on the issue of small arms and light weapons transfers and U.S. efforts to address the issue. To obtain information on the extent of small arms and light weapons transfers worldwide, we obtained and reviewed documents from the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, the International Action Network on Small Arms, the Norwegian Initiative on Arms Transfers, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Institute for Security Studies, and the Red Cross. We also interviewed officials and collected information on U.S. efforts to address small arms transfers from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and the Interagency Working Group on Small Arms and Light Weapons within the State Department; and the Treasury Department, including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and the U.S. Customs Service.

To obtain information on "lessons learned" regarding weapon collection and "buyback" programs, we focused on (1) reviewing numerous written studies on weapon collection programs conducted in other countries and in the United States, (2) meeting with and interviewing acknowledged experts in the area, and (3) acquiring information from knowledge centers on the issue. We met with and interviewed officials from the National Defense University and the Departments of Defense and State. We attended a September 1999 conference on the policies and practices of small arms and light weapons disarmament sponsored by the Fafo Institute of Applied

Social Science, in Montreal, Canada. At this conference, we met with and interviewed experts involved with weapon collection efforts in Mozambique, El Salvador, Albania, and Sierra Leone. We also traveled to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to meet with U.S. Army Special Operation Command officers who were involved with the U.S. buyback programs in Haiti. In addition, we spoke with officials from the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Command at Fort Bragg and the Center for Lessons Learned and the Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. We also reviewed written after-action and historical reports on Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama and Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti.

We performed our work from January 1999 through May 2000 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Comments From the Department of Defense

DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, DC 20301-2800

27 JUN 2000

In reply refer to:
I-00/007829-LPA

Mr. Benjamin F. Nelson
Director, International Relations and
Trade Issues
National Security and International Affairs Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548.

Dear Mr. Nelson:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO Draft report, "CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS: U.S. Efforts to Control the Availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons," dated June 12, 2000 (GAO Code 711407/OSD Case 2034.

The Department reviewed the draft report and generally concurs with the recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct that guidance, based on a comprehensive assessment and approach, be developed for implementing weapon collection or buy-back programs.

The Department of Defense will examine the requirement for involvement in weapons collection and buy-back programs and promulgate guidance as appropriate.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report. My point of contact on this matter is Mr. Dale Sampson. He may be contacted by email: dale.sampson@osd.pentagon.mil or by telephone at (703) 601-3656.

Sincerely,

A.R. KELTZ
ACTING DIRECTOR

Comments From the Department of State

United States Department of State

Chief Financial Officer

Washington, D.C. 20520-7427

July 7, 2000

Mr. Henry L. Hinton, Jr.,
Assistant Comptroller General,
National Security and International Affairs,
U.S. General Accounting Office.

Dear Mr. Hinton:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS: U.S. Efforts to Control the Availability of Small Arms and Light Weapons," GAO/NSIAD-00-141, GAO Job Code 711407.

As your report documents, the Department of State has accorded a high priority to addressing the dangers posed by trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Our efforts in this area are aimed at promoting regional security, peace and reconciliation in regions of conflict, and to help shut down illicit arms markets that fuel the violence associated with terrorism, international organized crime, and drug trafficking.

The Department is pleased overall with the report content, analysis and findings, and provided comments to your staff for incorporation in the report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Ms. Geraldine Baker, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, at (202) 647-4936.

Sincerely,

Bert T. Edwards

cc: GAO/NSIAD -- Mr. Kachura
State/INL/ENT -- Ms. Baker

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