

# HMUN 2020

Haarlem Model United Nations

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**Issue:**

Intercepting weapon flows to rebellion groups

**Forum:**

General Assembly 1



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<b>Forum:</b>	GA1
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## Introduction

The great increase in the amount of armed conflicts around the world over the last years has led to several problems. One of these problems is the fact that armed conflicts and political unrest often facilitate the creation and expansion of rebellion groups. These rebellion groups often take their own arms into the conflict, escalating the situation even further. This report will discuss the monitoring and intercepting of weapon flows to these conflict areas, with the emphasis lying on the arm flows to rebel groups specifically.

The research report will be written on the general problem. However, some specific case studies will be referred to in an attempt to provide the delegates with succinct examples and solutions to the problem at hand. Situations such as those in Syria, Turkey, Ukraine or Yemen may be named throughout the report and even with the generality of the issue, it is wise to look into discrete situations to gain a more practical view of the issue.

Whilst discussing the issue, it will be crucial to approach specific groups with a lot of caution, as labelling certain groups as rebellious groups might hit a nerve. Therefore, it will be more attainable to focus on general solutions to intercept weapon flows to rebellion groups.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **Rebellion groups**

A "rebellion or rebel group" is defined here as a political group that uses armed conflict in opposition to established government or governments for reasons such as to seek political change or to establish or maintain or to gain independence. No matter the political stance of countries in this matter, the issue we are attempting to solve is preventing rebels from gaining access to the specified weaponry.

### **Weapon flows**

Weapon flows are movement of weapons from one country to another or one political group to another, whether legal or illicit. There are rules concerning the trade of arms, internationally as well as in-state. Rules differ between greatly between different states, while international rules on weapon trade are generally accepted. This report will focus mostly on the trade of conventional weapons. This

term concerns a wide range of weapons however, meaning that the rules vary greatly along this spectrum.

## **Conventional arms**

Conventional Weapons encompass a wide range of equipment not limited to armored combat vehicles, combat helicopters, combat aircraft, warships, small arms and light weapons, landmines, cluster munitions, ammunition and artillery. Conventional weapons are the most common type of armament globally and historically the most commonly used in conflict. Note that the illegal trade to rebel groups mostly concerns small arms, light weapons, ammunition and sometimes explosives. It is not very often that large vehicles or extreme weaponry are traded. These are mostly acquired in raids of government facilities.

## General Overview

The issue of intercepting weapon flows to rebellion groups is one that can be interpreted in different ways. Firstly, the issue often originates from the chaos and lack of enforcement of international laws in conflict zones. In Syria for example, however controversial the situation at hand may be, the rebels are said to be receiving weapons from foreign governments, stealing them from government facilities, or purchasing them on the black market. This is mainly possible due to the situation the rebel groups are in and the lack of monitoring the government or international parties are able to place on the specified conflict. While it must be considered that in some situations it is debatable whether the possession of weaponry by rebel groups is harmful to the situation, the current issue at hand will mostly discuss opposing illegal weapon flows. In the case of Syria, for example, it can be debated that the weapon flow to rebel groups is not necessarily a bad thing, however, these weapon flows often fall into the hands of terrorist groups such as ISIS, or they are intercepted by other rebel groups. As the United Nations, it is important to refrain from being caught up in a conflict and to try to solve the issue by abiding international and state laws.

The second part of the issue that can be focused on is the intercepting of weapon flows itself. An example we can use here is when the United States of America disclosed information on the interception of a weapon shipment to the Houthi rebel group in Yemen. The U.S. then believed it was the Iranian government who was responsible for these actions, but proof was never disclosed. Something we can take away from this situation however, is that with increased monitoring of, in this case coastal waters around the conflict area, more weapons can be intercepted and in this way rebel groups can be prevented from gaining access to illegal weaponry. The monitoring of this situation is obviously not limited to waters of the coast, but can also be done at the borders of conflict zones and within international trade in general. A problem with this issue is, however, that some governments do not wish to be monitored as such and this can result in an increasingly difficult situation.

However, there is a significant lacking of global rules or binding measures regulating the trade of conventional arms. To be able to monitor and prevent the illicit trade of weapons to rebel groups, the United Nations as well as other parties must be able to lawfully intercept these weapons or prevent them from being traded. The United Nations Secretary-General has more than once voiced his concern about the concerning lack of international laws and action on this issue. The recently adopted Arms Trade Treaty (A/RES/68/31) seeks to forbid irresponsible arms transfers and go against the transport of arms to war zones where they may exacerbate violence and contribute to the escalation of the conflict, leading to further abuse of human rights, illegal uprising and violence.

The Guidelines for International Arms Transfers agreed in 1991 by the UN state the following definition of illegal arms trafficking: 'that international trade in conventional arms which is contrary to the laws of states and/or international law'. The problem with this vague definition is, however, that international law may be generally accepted, although not always efficiently ratified, but national laws differ greatly. If there is no binding international law to stop a country from exporting their weapons to a certain country or rebel group, their own national laws are the only thing the country needs to concern themselves with. As is the problem for example with the Arms Trade Treaty, adopted in 2013 by the UN. The ATT is a comprehensive and legally binding instrument, establishing common international standards concerning the trade of small arms and other conventional weaponry. It was passed in 2013 with an enormous majority of 153 votes in favor. However, it has become clear that a lot of signatory parties are never planning on ratifying this treaty, as the U.S., Russia, and China are currently all opposed to this idea. These countries often use the argument that this treaty would impose on their national sovereignty, and especially parties in the U.S. such as the National Rifles Associations have been negative of such treaties.

## Major Parties Involved

### **Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)**

The ATT is a multilateral trade convention that regulates the trade in arms internationally. It was imposed to increase regional and international peace, transparency and to decrease human suffering. The ATT enforces states to monitor arms exports and to ensure the weapons are not used for purposes such as the violation of human right and/or terrorism. Member states will be expected to standardize import and export regulations and enforce these with UN assistance, to prevent these weapons from falling into the hands of for example ISIS in Syria.

### **Major arms commerce parties**

The international arms commerce is estimated to be worth around 70 billion US dollars yearly. The combined revenues of the top 100 weapon manufacturers add up to nearly 400 billion dollars. This does, however, include domestic sales. There are obviously some parties that benefit greatly from the lenient rules in place at this moment in time.

2018 Rank	Supplier	Arms Exp
1	 <a href="#">United States</a>	10,508
2	 <a href="#">Russia</a>	6,409
3	 <a href="#">France</a>	1,768
4	 <a href="#">Germany</a>	1,277
5	 <a href="#">Spain</a>	1,188
6	 <a href="#">South Korea</a>	1,083
7	 <a href="#">China</a>	1,040
8	 <a href="#">United Kingdom</a>	741
9	 <a href="#">Israel</a>	707
10	 <a href="#">Italy</a>	611

The table above illustrates the contribution of major arms exporters in millions of US dollars. These are estimates from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and are not entirely accurate, as weapons can also be supplied as military aid for little costs.

2010–2018 rank	Recipient	Arms imp
1	 <a href="#">Saudi Arabia</a>	3,810
2	 <a href="#">Australia</a>	1,572
3	 <a href="#">China</a>	1,566
4	 <a href="#">India</a>	1,539
5	 <a href="#">Egypt</a>	1,484
6	 <a href="#">Algeria</a>	1,318
7	 <a href="#">South Korea</a>	1,317
8	 <a href="#">United Arab Emirates</a>	1,101
9	 <a href="#">Qatar</a>	816
10	 <a href="#">Pakistan</a>	777

The above table illustrates the import in millions of US dollars. This is an estimate and is not entirely accurate. Be aware that the import of weapons in nations may greatly fluctuate as they enter and exit wars. These imports are usually legal and registered. No information concerning the rebel trade of weapons can be taken from this table specifically.

## Rebellion groups

To be able to overthrow a government, or to pursue their ideology, rebel groups often feel the necessity to take up arms. They try to obtain arms through the black market, or by getting international parties on their side. Some countries benefit financially or influentially from these trades, and would therefore likely be opposed to stricter regulations.

## Timeline of Key Events

Geneva Protocol    17<sup>th</sup> June 1925  
Arms Trade Treaty    24<sup>th</sup> December 2014

## Previous attempts to resolve the issue

Previous attempts to regulate and control the trade of conventional arms have been hindered by the argument that these treaties would impose on the sovereignty of signatory countries. Countries such as the U.S., that have recently withdrawn from the treaty all together, have been reluctant to impose these measures on themselves, in fear of the treaty affecting their national arms politics. While massive world powers such as Russia, China and the United States may gain the most from political stability in current problem areas, they have all refrained from signing such treaties. As the misplacement of conventional weapons is a global problem, international laws will have little to no effect if they are not agreed to and enforced by relevant member states.

## Possible Solutions

Possible solutions for the problem at hand would be similar to the earlier passed resolutions. However, they would need to take into account the importance of a global ratification of this treaty. It would need to intrude a nation's sovereignty as little as possible. As we are currently discussing the intercepting of weaponry intended for rebel groups specifically, it could be wise to focus the resolution on this specific form of trade, as this would have less effect on other countries who want to distance themselves from these groups and the conflicts they confer in. It could be possible to monitor conflict area's even more than is already being done, or the resolution could focus itself on improving the transparency of arms manufacturers and its exporters.

One of the main problems that constantly revolve around this issue is that weapon trade protocols often influence economies negatively and the politicians

responsible often have their public backing fall apart, like in the United States. However, solutions can be found that do not interfere with free trade, whilst preventing the rebel groups from acquiring dangerous weaponry that can lead to the further escalation of conflicts.

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