AFRICAN SECURITY CHALLENGES:
NOW AND OVER THE HORIZON

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN AFRICA:
CURRENT AND/OR FUTURE THREAT?

MAY 2009

WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION REPORT

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THE DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY
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The mission of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) is to safeguard America and its allies from weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high explosives) by providing capabilities to reduce, eliminate, and counter the threat, and mitigate its effects.

The Advanced Systems and Concepts Office (ASCO) supports this mission by providing long-term rolling horizon perspectives to help DTRA leadership identify, plan, and persuasively communicate what is needed in the near term to achieve the longer-term goals inherent in the agency’s mission. ASCO also emphasizes the identification, integration, and further development of leading strategic thinking and analysis on the most intractable problems related to combating weapons of mass destruction.

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SECTIO1:
BACKGROUND

On February 6, 2007, U.S. President George W. Bush directed the establishment of a new Combatant Command focused on Africa. The announcement of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) kindled a flurry of discussion amongst Africa watchers in Washington, DC and beyond. Debate largely centered on the implications of this announcement, the mission of the new Command, its location, and above all, how AFRICOM actions would reconcile with those of other players in the region and whether the decision signified a militarization of U.S. policy in the region.

Irrespective of this debate, the establishment of the Command reflects several important changes in U.S. Government, particularly U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) perceptions about the importance of Africa to U.S. strategic interests. Previously, three geographic Combatant Commands (COCOMs) shared responsibility for Africa, a situation that sometimes resulted in fragmented action in the region. AFRICOM’s almost continent-wide responsibility allows the DoD to assume a comprehensive approach as it addresses security challenges on the continent, suggests an increasing recognition of the commonalities across African states and regions, and serves as an acknowledgement that many security concerns and obstacles, as well as their root causes and effects, transcend these physical boundaries. The Command’s interagency component also suggests a greater recognition of the need for consistent coordination of U.S. activities to address these security challenges. The DoD is but one player in the region and must consistently work with other U.S. Government departments and agencies to support broader activities in the region when appropriate.

With this heightened interest and attention in mind, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency’s Advanced Systems and Concepts Office (DTRA/ASCO) initiated a fundamental research assessment of African security challenges – what they are today and what they might be over the horizon. This assessment could be used to inform future planning and research for ASCO, and inform those U.S. Government players active in the region, including, but not limited to the newest form of DoD engagement, AFRICOM.

Research Objective and Approach

It is important to note that the vision for this project at the outset was to study AFRICOM’s mission and structure and determine how these would affect the way that the Command addressed security challenges in the region. When it was determined that many conferences, workshops, and publications had already addressed this topic (coupled with the fact that the AFRICOM mission and structure were still being refined as it stood up), the research team realized that a broader and fundamental “challenges-centric” assessment was needed. Indeed, many players were rightly investigating the “nuts and bolts” of AFRICOM and other U.S. engagement in the region (specifically how that might be affected by the stand-up of the new Command), yet few were conducting a comprehensive assessment of what security challenges those players might need to address today and in the future. The research team
felt an “over the horizon” aspect was especially important and an area in which our research could inform future strategic planning.

The research objective was to define the major categories of security challenges in Africa today and explore possibilities for what they might be over the horizon. Using fundamental insights from academic and research experts to develop a better understanding of those challenges, the research was intended to explore how the challenges intersect and identify their importance for U.S., especially AFRICOM, activities and engagement on the continent. This research would provide a platform for further study of how the United States can address the identified challenges through various (and ideally coordinated) forms of engagement, including AFRICOM.

To accomplish this objective, the research team performed academic literature and expert reviews to identify a large list of African security challenges with the recognition that there is some debate among experts on the challenge areas and their importance relative to one another. The team also surveyed U.S. Government strategic documents (including AFRICOM mission and vision statements) to obtain a list of those challenges the government identifies as important. Eventually, this list was pared down to three broad categories of challenges and served as a foundation for an academic workshop at which the security challenges were discussed in October 2008.1

1. Transnational security issues
   a. Small arms/light weapons
   b. Maritime security
   c. Disease

2. Internal and regional conflict
   a. Border issues, spread of conflict, and peacekeeping
   b. Humanitarian assistance, refugees, and internally-displaced persons
   c. Rebels
   d. Post-conflict reconstruction issues

3. Potential flashpoints/future security challenges
   a. Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and R&D developments
   b. Oil and natural resource competition and exploitation
   c. Terrorism and radical Islam
   d. China and other states

While the approach to the challenges selection was not scientific, the research team viewed this research project as a starting point and not an end point in the study. The workshop in October 2008 provided a foundation for more in-depth and specific discussions and research on major security challenges and their implications; it also pointed the research

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1 The list was pared down for both practical and budgetary reasons. That is, the research team needed to conduct a one day workshop with academic experts and therefore tried to select challenges that could be discussed within that timeframe, but also allow for broad participation among many types of experts. It also selected challenges of particular interest to the sponsoring organization (DTRA/ASCO) and incorporated some challenges that might not be viewed as important today, but could dramatically affect the security landscape tomorrow.
team to several issues involving government and academic debate. Additionally, it highlighted the need to consider various methodologies to discuss security challenges among these two groups to ensure effective discussion. Indeed, it was also widely understood that one study would not be enough to accurately and comprehensively capture the challenges that make up the African security environment.

After the October 2008 workshop, the research team selected four specific challenges, or in some cases combined ones, from the above challenge list to receive more in depth attention by way of working group discussions and analytic papers over the course of the next several months. Participants at these working group discussions would focus on the current and possible future nature of a specific challenge, for example, small arms and light weapons, and how it might intersect with others. They would also preliminarily consider the implications of this challenge for U.S. engagement on the continent. In particular, participants would focus on the dimensions of the challenge that might be manipulated and issues associated with that manipulation.

The topics selected for further study included: weapons of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons, militancy and refugees, and disease.2 After the four topical discussions, the research team would host an additional working session to synthesize results, get additional inputs, and consider the “so what?” question for U.S. engagement on the continent in greater depth. While the topical discussions would mainly involve academic participants, this last working session would more directly involve government players.

The report that follows outlines the results of the second working group discussion session that focused on small arms and light weapons. As such, this report should be viewed as one element of the research endeavor on African security challenges with complete results and findings still pending.

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2 These topics were selected for several reasons. They were the subject of broad debate at the October 2008 workshop or similar events, of interest to the sponsoring organization, and/or lacked extensive study within the U.S. Department of Defense.
SECTION 2:
WORKING GROUP SESSION OBJECTIVES,
SUCCESSES, AND CHALLENGES

Objectives

DTRA/ASCO invited a small group of experts on small arms and light weapons and Africa to participate in a working group discussion to better define the nature of the threat, the possible implications for U.S. engagement, and the ways in which the threat (if deemed important) could be manipulated through activities on the continent.

As the second in a series of working sessions on specific security challenges, this working session, like the ones that would follow, had a secondary objective. Experiences at the October 2008 workshop suggested that there are some difficulties associated with conducting government and academic dialogue on security challenges. This was especially apparent when analyzing the different priorities and approaches the two communities when assessing security challenges. One question that revealed the different priorities of the communities, for example, is the issue of whether to consider the root causes of the security challenge area or only their effects. Further, what are the implications of that decision for formulating and implementing policy and related activities in the challenge area? This working session served as one test case to refine ways to facilitate government and academic dialogue in such a way that can most effectively inform strategic planning and understanding while reflecting the analytic complexities of the study topics.3

Working Group Discussion Structure

Participants

Meeting participants were drawn from U.S. military education institutions and domestic and international research organizations. Each of the four expert participants either had a publishing record on issues surrounding the issue of small arms and light weapons (SA/LW) in Africa or extensive experience addressing SA/LW issues on the ground in Africa in recent years. The majority of the participants were experienced in engaging with the U.S. government so there was a very detailed discussion of implications of the SA/LW situation in Africa for U.S. engagement on the continent. Additional observers represented AFRICOM and DTRA, both the Advanced Systems and Concepts Office and the Operations Enterprise, On-Site Inspections Directorate, Small Arms and Light Weapons Branch.

Agenda

The meeting was comprised of both a presentation of a foundational paper and plenary discussions. The research team selected one participant, Christopher Carr from the U.S. Air

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3 For a more detailed discussion of this topic, please see the first workshop report from this study, African Security Challenges: Now and Over the Horizon. A full copy of the report can be found at: http://www.dtra.mil/ascos/ascoweb/pdf/Africa%20Security.pdf.
War College, to develop a draft foundational paper which would consider the current and future nature of the security challenge posed by SA/LW in Africa and begin to identify ways the United States could engage to manipulate this challenge. He was asked to specifically address what AFRICOM might do to address the challenge over the long-term and how its actions might be coordinated with other players in the region. All participants received the draft paper ahead of time. After a presentation of the paper, the other participants provided specific comments on the draft paper to assist the author in his revision.

After this initial discussion, the workshop organizers held an additional moderated discussion to consider the nature of the SA/LW challenge writ large in Africa and implications for U.S. engagement over the long-term. In particular,

- How could this challenge be manipulated?
- What dimensions of challenge should each player focus on? What issues can AFRICOM work on?
- What can the players do and how might actions be coordinated?

After the working session, Carr was given an opportunity to refine his analysis. The project team drafted this report to summarize the broader findings of the group.

**Meeting the Objectives: Difficulties and Successes**

**Success #1:** The working session was successful in convening a small group of experts who have analyzed the small arms and light weapons threat in Africa that could consider both the nature of the threat and implications for engagement.

**Discussion:** The majority of the participating experts had conducted and published extensive research and analyses on the SA/LW threat in Africa, including, in some cases, in-depth case studies. Those without a publishing record had conducted extensive on the ground research or related activities in Africa in recent years. Given this level of knowledge, the discussion about the nature of the SA/LW threat, both its root causes and effects, was quite detailed and nuanced.

Though the participants represented a variety of public and private institutions (some which do research for government and some that do not), all participants were well experienced in considering implications of the SA/LW threat for general government engagement and discussion proceeded much further along that line than it had at the October 2008 broad academic workshop. Two of the experts, representing private research organizations, could also address issues surrounding NGO and international organizations engagement in the region, and how those forms of engagement might intersect with government engagement, which added depth to the discussion. Overall, the experience pointed to the value of this sub-community of researchers adept at discussing implications of security issues for U.S. engagement.

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4 Though the participants acknowledged the importance of acknowledging the root causes and effects of the SA/LW threats in Africa, they did not discuss the implications of focusing on the root causes or the effects for decision making about ways for the U.S. to engage on the issue.
**Difficulty #1:** The discussion raised awareness of some complexities associated with discussing SA/LW and conducting analyses about them more generally.

**Discussion:** The participants generally acknowledged the complexities associated with SA/LW analysis. Though all of the participants agreed on the importance of discussing the broader issues associated with analyzing SA/LW issues, in some cases the discussion veered away from discussing Africa SA/LW issues in particular and towards a broader discussion on analytic methodological challenges associated with analyzing SA/LW. The research team should have made a more concerted effort in defining the agenda so that this element could be considered and time was allotted to discussing implications of these methodological issues for analyzing SA/LW issues in Africa specifically.

**Difficulty #2:** Knowledge of what all U.S. players on the continent have the authority to do is required to inform discussion on ways the United States can engage on SA/LW issues.

**Discussion:** The participants enthusiastically discussed issues impacting U.S. engagement on SA/LW issues in Africa and demonstrated a good level of understanding of what an array of actors, including but not limited to American ones, do on the continent to address them and how those activities might be expanded or modified. Participants were particularly interested in discussing what the U.S. Africa Command might do to support U.S. engagement on SA/LW though the intent was to discuss U.S. engagement more broadly. Though they acknowledged that the Command may not be suited to address every SA/LW issue, the discussion demonstrated a lack of in-depth knowledge of the limitations on the Command’s authority on the continent and the degree to which it relies on other entities to formulate policies to provide foundations for its activities. Although this did not detract from the overall productiveness of the discussion, a read-ahead package on AFRICOM or a short brief by an AFRICOM representative might have eliminated some of these misunderstandings and ensured a more productive discussion that furthered dialogue on this issue.

**Difficulty #3:** Future dimensions of the SA/LW threat were not heavily discussed.

**Discussion:** The participants agreed that SA/LW impact the state of security in Africa today. Given that there are many dimensions to today’s threat to discuss; participants did not generally consider how the threat might change over the long-term and the various implications of those possible changes. A portion of the agenda dedicated to a focused discussion on future potentials might have proved valuable.

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However, given the uniformity, it did not allow the project team to further refine its methodology on how to best conduct government and academic dialogue on security challenges, particularly when it involves those academics which have an exceptional understanding of the particular challenge, but not on government engagement issues.
Overall Threads of Discussion

There was considerable agreement on the importance of SA/LW availability, proliferation, and use in shaping the African security environment. Likewise, the participants agreed that the United States has a role to play in addressing SA/LW threats in the region. They acknowledged that several things are required for the United States to effectively engage on these issues. These include: the availability of quality research and on-the-ground data collection by experts to help decision makers understand the nature of the threat; a coherent policy and engagement strategy which addresses all of the dimensions of the threat; the political will and resources to develop activities to implement the aforementioned strategy; an investigation of opportunities for the United States to partner with other actors to address the threat; and a consideration of those dimensions of the threat which can be best manipulated and by whom. The latter consideration should include an examination of potential roles for AFRICOM over the long-term. Overall, the experts suggested that the United States might expand existing programs to address SA/LW issues and contribute further to interdicting arms traffickers in particular. They also suggested that the United States might sponsor and encourage more quality research on SA/LW in Africa, in particular those projects which enhance understanding of the demand for SA/LW, which, according to the participants, is a core issue. They emphasized that engagement should include, but not be limited to, efforts to control SA/LW proliferation.

When considering the SA/LW threat in Africa, several discussion points emerged. The participants acknowledged two major areas of SA/LW threats: the influx of SA/LW into the African continent; and SA/LW demand, possession, and use in Africa. On the former point, weapons production is not a major issue (at least in comparison to others); however the trafficking of arms into and within the continent is a major source of concern. In particular, there has been a major shift in the post-Cold War era on the nature of this trafficking. More players – both state and non-state actors (including but not limited to organized criminals, pirates, and blacksmiths) – are becoming involved in these activities, and many are motivated by the potential monetary rewards. Due to increased linkages between actors, the networks are becoming more sophisticated and can be used to traffic SA/LW and other illicit goods – like narcotics. This development (and the fact that many non-state actors traffic arms as a side job) makes these activities harder to track. Poor border controls and corruption among border officials also increase the ease by which traffickers can conduct these activities. Along the same line, most traffickers are aware that current interdiction efforts, when employed, will rarely result in prosecution for a variety of reasons and therefore do not fear them. The participants generally agreed that stronger efforts to increase the chances of interdiction and follow-on prosecution are necessary.

However, the participants cautioned that SA/LW trafficking is not the only dimension of the SA/LW threat in Africa. Indeed, it should not be assumed that stopping arms transfers will alleviate the SA/LW threat in the region. At least three other issues must be considered.
including the demand for weapons; the role of SA/LW in conflict; and the issues surrounding securing and reducing SA/LW inventories.

On the first point, the participants generally acknowledged that root causes of SA/LW demand and possession need to be acknowledged. These may include a perceived lack of security and/or an endemic gun culture, though the latter point was a source of debate. Although it should not be assumed that Africa is pre-determinately violent, these underlying factors must be examined.

Secondly, it is important to realize that not only do the presence and use of SA/LW multiply the intensity and duration of intrastate conflicts in Africa, but the transfer of SA/LW from conflict zones to peaceful ones may impact the broader security environment.

Thirdly, SA/LW inventory control issues are prevalent in Africa. Although security concerns surrounding state-owned SA/LW stockpile management are acknowledged and addressed through U.S. bilateral assistance programs, many national militias and private security companies also have unsecure stockpiles, yet there is little attention given to this problem. These entities lack training about how to do inventory control, in particular, and efforts to assist them should increase. Another issue relates to weapons collection and destruction. In many cases, demobilized soldiers may not be subject to effective weapons collection and broader reintegration programs, so those arms the soldiers bore during a conflict remain in their possession (along with the skills to use them) and may pose a future security threat. Additionally, the long life of weapons and ammunition needs to be acknowledged. Once a weapon or a piece of ammunition enters Africa (unless destroyed through politically appropriate means), it does not become obsolete over time. Nature does not have a major impact on weapons’ or munitions’ usability.

In addition to considering the dimensions of the SA/LW threat, the participants also underscored several broad SA/LW analytic issues which impact the way SA/LW threats (in Africa or beyond) can be studied. First, the participants underscored the importance of acknowledging analytic complexities associated with this endeavor. One major issue is a deficiency in quality research and data to support decision making on SA/LW and understanding of the specific contexts in which SA/LW threats emerge. This research should include expert data collection on the continent. Second, the tradeoffs associated with considering root causes of SA/LW threats or their effects must be considered. Related to that, analysts need to consider both the specific nature of SA/LW threats in particular, but also the points of intersection between SA/LW threats and other security issues, such as weak or bad governance, more broadly.

Overall, there was little debate about the centrality of SA/LW threats to the African security environment. However, discussions underscored the importance of considering the threats in a holistic way, while maintaining an appropriate appreciation for country or regional context. For the foreseeable future, SA/LW will remain a major issue in Africa and appropriate engagement strategies should be defined over the long-term.
The Details: Complexities Associated with Analyzing SA/LW Issues

Although the discussion was generally grounded in Africa-specific analysis, the participants highlighted several broader issues which may impact how SA/LW issues are analyzed in Africa. These issues include: the little/large analytic paradox; the availability of quality research and data; and contextual dependencies. All participants agreed on the importance of these issues and highlighted some analytic challenges which need to be overcome.

The Little/Large Analytic Paradox

The first issue relates to analyst perspective of the SA/LW issue area. As Carr discusses in his paper, like in other parts of the world, analysts are uncertain how many of these “little” weapons are in Africa. There is, however, general agreement that there are millions if not tens of millions. Given the sheer numbers, there is some hesitation among analysts in thinking that anything can be done about the “large” problem (though Carr does not believe this is the case). However, conversely, SA/LW, despite their high numbers, are generally viewed as not being as destructive as those weapons that are traditionally labeled “weapons of mass destruction” (i.e. chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons) and some therefore question the total value of addressing the problem though it is a large one. As the analysis of SA/LW can impact how they are addressed, this little/large paradox can have a broad impact on how the issue is approached from both an academic and a practical level.

Another expert concurred with the potential impacts of this paradox in developing analyses on SA/LW, but underscored the importance of focusing on contextual factors in such analyses. Knowing how many weapons are in existence may not be as important as understanding why the weapons are in Africa, how they are being used, and who has them, to define the nature of the threat and potential responses. Contextual factors also need to be considered. A small number of weapons in one area might actually be related to a greater security threat than a large number of weapons in another area.

Availability of Quality Research and Data

A second issue, the availability of quality SA/LW research and data, was the source of much discussion among the meeting participants. Two lines of discussion emerged on this issue: current difficulties in meeting data collection needs and the potential positive gains of making quality research available to decision makers. There was general agreement among all participants, both academic and government, of the importance of generating more data and encouraging and conducting more high quality SA/LW-focused analyses.

The participants cited two challenges associated with current data collection efforts in Africa. The first relates to the difficulty in getting access to do data collection. As one expert observed, the NGO community, such as the Small Arms Survey, has historically been the leader in providing data about SA/LW to support program planning and development because of its expertise and capabilities. However, sometimes obtaining “on the ground” local access to perform collection is easier said than done. Though NGOs can obtain better access than foreign governments (including the United States) in some regions in Africa, access can still be limited and it should not be assumed that an NGO as an entity will have or can obtain data on every country, region, city etc. in Africa. To support this claim,
another expert noted a case in the Sudan where individuals affiliated with non-government or government organizations did not have as much access as individuals acting independently. However, the participants generally agreed that these access challenges should not dissuade organizations from executing information gathering activities because, as one expert pointed out, data is a necessary foundation for making good policy decisions. Without first hand information, analysts may need to rely on secondary sources, which could be biased. Without quality data, it is much harder for the decision makers and analysts alike to pinpoint issues, understand specific circumstances, and develop appropriate responses to the SA/LW problem.

Another challenge is decreased funding for SA/LW research. In recent years, though governments have relied on the NGO community for more expertise on SA/LW, there is less funding to support on the ground data collection and SA/LW research more broadly. Many of the organizations that have historically been known as the “go to” organizations for quality SA/LW data collection and analysis, such as the Small Arms Survey, have been forced to expand their study domain to other security issues in order to continue to function. Given this economic reality, SA/LW studies are no longer as readily available to those depending on them to formulate decisions about the threat.

Lamenting this decrease in funding, the participants emphasized the potential positive gains in sponsoring and encouraging quality research on SA/LW. One expert noted that this research should use both qualitative and quantitative analytic techniques, but in every case, the focus should be on ensuring quality. Echoing this point, another participant cited several recent United Nations (UN) reports containing detailed evidence of SA/LW problems which demonstrate the positive impact that quality research can have (and the detrimental effects of inadequate and poor research) on ensuring comprehensive decision maker understanding of SA/LW issues.

Building on this point, the experts considered those specific dimensions of the SA/LW issue area which require more research and analysis. These included:

1. Research to understand the drivers of SA/LW possession and transfers in Africa.
2. Research to understand what programs and activities exist to reduce the SA/LW threat across the international, regional, national, and local levels.\(^6\)
3. Research on how the SA/LW threat impacts and is impacted by broader social issues that shape the operating environment.
4. Research to assist AFRICOM (as well as other players) to develop appropriate measures of effectiveness of SA/LW programs’ impacts on security.\(^7\)
5. A deeper analysis on the prospects and implications for the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

\(^6\) One expert maintained that this is especially important to help pinpoint areas where specific players can assist in SA/LW interdiction, including AFRICOM.

\(^7\) An expert noted that, in his opinion, developing these metrics, including finding ways to get empirical evidence about them, is crucial for developing and modifying response plans.
Importance of Context

Throughout the course of this meeting, the experts continually reiterated the need to take a holistic approach when analyzing the SA/LW problem in Africa. However, they cautioned against ignoring country and regional contexts when conducting analysis. For example, the SA/LW threat might arise as a result of a certain set of factors in one region and a different set in another. Likewise, the threat may manifest itself in different ways. For this reason, as one expert observed, on the ground studies of the threat and case study-based analyses at both country and regional levels are crucial. Knowing and understanding the context is imperative to developing quality analyses of the situation, which can help with early warning and inform activities to reduce the threat, such as weapons collection programs.

However, the participants cautioned that though lessons learned from one activity in one region may not always directly apply to another context, an investigation of the potential application of past lessons is crucial to formulating strategies for engagement. Though there are major differences across cases, some common ingredients are necessary to develop and execute initiatives to reduce the SA/LW threats in Africa. The participants cited several examples of this. In all cited cases, the particular African governments (and also international partners) needed both political will and resources to confront and address the SA/LW threats on a sustained basis over the long-term. Along this line, one participant suggested that it is rare that African governments have both the political will and the resources to address SA/LW issues. In some cases, as another participant suggested, a government might recognize that there is a SA/LW problem but is hesitant to implement counter-measures to address it because doing so would not serve the government’s broader interests. Motivations and interests also need to be examined in this context.

The Details: The Centrality of SA/LW to Understanding African Security Issues

One thread of debate was whether SA/LW should be considered manifestations or consequences of insecurity or causes of insecurity in and of themselves. All participants agreed that the implications of focusing on the cause or the effect dimension must be acknowledged, in addition to the linkages between SA/LW issues and other ones (such as weak governance) that shape the security environment. A brief discussion about the linkages between SA/LW and disease highlighted this dual complexity. One expert focused on issues surrounding disease intervention while another focused more on root causes. Another expert suggested that SA/LW use often exacerbates disease transmission in Africa because humanitarian and health-related NGOs and international organizations may be prevented from entering the highly instable areas due to security concerns. The previous expert also touched on the impacts of violence but in a different way. He suggested that violence in Africa, including violence caused by SA/LW usage, often drives women into prostitution to meet their needs. As prostitutes, women can further the spread of HIV across a region, which further affects a state’s stability and security.

In the end, the participants agreed that while SA/LW may not be the core issue to African security, it is one of the core issues, linked with others. A holistic approach must be employed when studying SA/LW as this challenge area intersects with other important
security issues. These links may be visible at the root causes or the effects level. In addition to the link highlighted above, one may also consider how terrorism, narcotics trafficking, conflict over natural resources and economic crisis issues intersect with SA/LW concerns. More generally, intersections with overarching social issues in Africa must also be considered.

The Details: The Threat Posed by the Influx of SA/LW into Africa

The participants focused heavily on how arms supply and trafficking activities shape the SA/LW threat landscape, the various forms these activities take, and how these activities may intersect with other forms of trafficking. There was general agreement that weapons production is not a major SA/LW issue in Africa (Kenya, as one participant pointed out, could be persuaded to shut down its weapons production plant); the major issue is instead the influx of weapons into the region. This influx of weapons has undergone a shift in recent years, not only in terms of the types of weapons, but also in terms of who is moving them and why. Any consideration of this dimension of the threat requires a good understanding of the array of players that are likely involved in this activity and how they are linked together.

The Players

Non-State Actors

Several experts pointed to the shift in arms trafficker motivations since the end of the Cold War. As one expert noted, during the Cold War, most traffickers were motivated by ideology. Today, most of them are motivated by money. The introduction of more types of non-state actors, due to the lucrative nature of brokering and transporting these weapons and the ease of doing so, is making the illicit trafficking network larger and more interconnected. With more players, more complex activities can be carried out with less effort. Those engaged in SA/LW trafficking activities might also be trafficking narcotics, animal products (for example, ivory), and/or diamonds and might be using the same shipments, trucks, and/or planes to execute these activities. Now, for example, an aircraft that brings small arms to Africa can transport drugs on the return flight. Likewise, traffickers can use guns as currency to buy narcotics or diamonds or vice versa, furthering the trafficking cycle. These links between SA/LW and other forms of trafficking cannot be ignored, though further discussions need to occur on the determination of when it is appropriate for broader programs focused on curbing narcotics smuggling, for example, to address SA/LW trafficking (or SA/LW issues more generally) and when it is more appropriate for SA/LW issues to be addressed through distinct programs.

Organized Criminals

As one expert pointed out, small arms traffickers’ activities and those of organized criminals are becoming increasingly more intertwined due to common monetary incentives. This adds a degree of complexity to tracking activities. Organized criminals as well as other types of

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8 Along the same lines, those studying other security issues which intersect with SA/LW ones should also employ a holistic approach to analysis which incorporates a consideration of SA/LW issues.
actors may traffic arms as a side element of their work, which makes tracking more difficult. Even if tracking is possible, there is a difference in firepower capabilities between those police and military doing the tracking and the groups being tracked. In many cases, organized criminal groups can outgun the police and military personnel charged with interdicting these activities. Lack of law enforcement training in dealing with SA/LW issues is also an issue deserving further consideration.

**Pirates**

The SA/LW problem is also linked with another African security threat – piracy (which is a particular concern in the Horn of Africa and the Gulf of Guinea). According to one expert, pirates are becoming increasingly reliant on SA/LW to conduct their business. Additionally, they are increasingly using more lethal weapons, such as rocket-propelled grenades. Another expert echoed this concern and noted that it has been difficult for the African governments to interdict this type of activity partly because these governments have been unable to match the pirate groups’ firepower. A broader question to consider is how to best conduct interdiction and determine the type of fire power needed to defeat the pirates.

**Blacksmiths**

Although little discussion took place on concerns associated with general SA/LW production in the region (though several participants briefly noted that it was not a major concern), there was more discussion on one specific type of weapons production and the security implications of these low-level activities. One expert expressed concern about some artisan-based groups producing traditionally-made weapons expanding their activities to proliferating weapons. These blacksmith networks (located for instance in Ghana, Senegal, Guinea, and Nigeria) are become increasingly sophisticated so it is harder to penetrate and map them as they expand. This expansion is not the only cause for concern. Some politicians, according to this expert, are directing some of these blacksmiths to produce weapons which can help them intimidate people into action, for example, to convince citizens to vote a certain way during elections. In some cases, the guns don’t even have to be used to accomplish this objective; their mere presence can invoke fear among the populace. These linkages between blacksmithing organizations and government officials who use them need to be examined further.

**State-Actors**

Most of the discussion focused on non-state suppliers and traffickers in the African region; however a limited discussion took place on possible future external state proliferators in the region and their potential impacts on the SA/LW security situation. The illicit dealings of states should not be ignored. In particular, one expert observed that analysts will need to monitor the SA/LW dealings of Iran, Belarus, and North Korea in Africa over the long-term. He further noted that the challenge is determining how other states can address this issue, and the necessity in considering it further. There was general agreement, however, that this is a lesser issue than non-state actor trafficking activities.
**Issues Impacting International Response**

The participants raised several issues which impact the effectiveness of government and international responses to these supplier and trafficking networks. Traffickers, for example, have little to fear in terms of consequences for their actions. The rewards far outweigh the risks. Not only, as one expert discussed, is this because of policy loopholes and a lack of international standards on brokering, but as Carr discusses in his paper, actions rarely go beyond naming and shaming. Those traffickers who are named and shamed are often not prosecuted because various intelligence agencies, including foreign ones, view traffickers as a source of information on international terrorist networks and therefore protect them. In exchange for information, misdemeanors are expunged from the traffickers’ records. Embargos likewise, due to this high return rate, are rarely effective in dissuading traffickers from engaging in these activities. Another issue is that even if one trafficker is caught and prosecuted, many more willing traffickers may be in line to assume that person’s duties and carry out the work he/she started, due to the great potential for monetary gain.

However, as Carr notes in his paper, some traffickers may be deterred by increasing the chances of interdiction, though this will require formulating policy, implementing agreements, and conducting regionally-based efforts. The provision of quality data to monitoring teams (including those sent by the UN) is also necessary to improve the chances that interdiction and monitoring activities will work. As another expert observed, data can be used to trigger law enforcement activities and trafficker convictions even if the convictions don’t stick. Further emphasizing the complexity of this issue, this expert also noted that increased monitoring in one area, however, may lead these traffickers to operate in other places where it is easier to work.

Corruption issues must also be considered. As mentioned previously, government officials in the region may have links with these networks and therefore do not intervene or turn a blind eye to the trafficking. Local authorities, charged with protecting Africa’s porous borders, may also turn a blind eye or be susceptible to bribery to clear cargo even if controls are in place. Carr also noted the ease by which traffickers can obtain end-use certificates for illicitly trafficked weapons, which further complicates this issue. However, in some cases, border controls are not even in place. Carr, in particular, noted a lack of oversight of private intercontinental air traffic and sea borders in the region in his paper.

**The Details: Issues Surrounding SA/LW Demand, Possession, and Use**

Further emphasizing the complexities involved in understanding all of the dimensions of the SA/LW problem in Africa, the participants considered the importance of several issues. These issues included: the root causes for SA/LW demand and possession; the inventory control of the weapons once they are in the region; and the role SA/LW play in shaping conflict. Although no general consensus was reached on these issues, all discussion pointed to a need to consider all dimensions of the SA/LW problem, acknowledge analytic complexities, and consider the issues from both a cause and an effect perspective.
**Root Causes of the SA/LW Concerns**

Several discussion items focused on the root causes of SA/LW concerns in Africa. There was a general agreement that any analysis needs to consider not just weapons proliferation and usage, but also examine the basis for the weapon demand. While participants had common perspectives about the role that the lack of security plays in shaping the demand, there was less agreement on the links between the adoption of the gun and its impact on African cultures and the manifestation of violence. However, both of these discussion threads suggested that analysts should acknowledge the need to consider root causes and avoid assuming that the region is simply pre-determinately violent.  

**Lack of Security**

There was broad agreement that governance issues are linked to SA/LW ones. As one participant pointed out, SA/LW can provide a means to obtain power. However, they are also manifestations of weak governance. Additionally, as Carr discussed in his paper, citizens in Africa generally have a belief that they are insecure. That is, when governments can’t provide for their citizens’ security, they may feel the need to provide it themselves. One way to do this is to possess and possibly use SA/LW. This lack of security, as another participant mentioned, can lead to both a culture of impunity and cycles of violence making the insecurity situation more complex and enduring. As such, any discussion of SA/LW requires a concerted examination of the ways in which security or lack thereof shapes the relative severity of current and future SA/LW threats in the region.

A related insecurity issue centers on the youth of Africa. Like their older counterparts, they may not believe that the governments have the capacity or will (or both) to provide for their population. The youth population in Africa is growing, and this concern about “youth bulge” has many implications for African security. SA/LW, as one participant noted, may be a symptom of this youth bulge crisis, particularly the underemployment of youth. This frustration and lack of economically stable prospects may (and in some cases does) lead this growing population to turn to SA/LW both to address economic needs (by trafficking etc.), but also to “solve” the problem by using SA/LW against a certain target. One participant noted that while this situation is particularly severe in West Africa, this is a larger African issue. Additionally, there is another layer of complexity to analyzing this issue. It should not be assumed that youth will turn to SA/LW; in fact, there is some uncertainty as to whether a particular segment of the youth population at a certain point in time will consider violent or peaceful means to deal with its plight. This makes developing responses to address the potential problem more difficult.

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9 Though the lack of security and gun culture issues were raised in this expert discussion group, the authors of this report would like to remind the reader that other issues may be root causes in shaping SA/LW demand and this summary should not be viewed as a comprehensive analysis of root causes.

10 Carr maintains that it is for this reason, for example, that weapons collection programs may pose a moral dilemma.
Gun Culture

The discussants also considered the degree to which an African gun culture or cultures shapes the SA/LW threat landscape. Although each expert chose to focus on a different cultural element, the general points of debate focused on how the gun emerged within a culture and the links of this emergence to violence and conflict today. The discussion raised awareness of the complexities associated with understanding gun cultures in Africa (whether they actually exist or not) and their impacts on security. Issues that need to be considered include: linkages with identity; the symbolism associated with guns; and the role external forces play in encouraging a gun culture. Another issue is the importance of the gun in warrior cultures and how the adoption of them has changed how violence emerges in those cultures. While no concise analysis of gun cultures and their impact on the SA/LW threat emerged from the discussion, the participants suggested all of these issues should be considered and the complexities and linkages between them need to be acknowledged.

One issue to consider is the way in which the gun is tied to identity in Africa. Another is the degree to which it can be used as a symbol for certain groups. The experts cited the ways in which the gun has been tied to the identity of several communities in the region. In Uganda, for example, the Karmadouge identity is tied to the gun. Some groups in the Southern Sudan also have strong identity-based ties to their weapons (and thus refuse to give them up). Likewise, the shotgun is central to the Donzo (or Dozo) identity in the Ivory Coast, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Additionally, for some groups in Africa, the gun is a symbol for overcoming a long-term struggle. In Mozambique, the AK-47 on the national flag is a symbol of the citizenry overcoming a long, historical struggle for independence. As such, any activity to reduce the threat of SA/LW, including disarmament, would need to take into account these indigenous, deeply culture-based issues. Further, one expert suggested that historical memories need to be acknowledged and understood when developing these activities.

Another issue is more externally-based. One expert suggested that forces beyond Africa have facilitated development of a gun culture in Africa. Globalization, and in particular, its impact on the youth of Africa, needs to be examined in this context due to its transforming effect. This expert argued that Western culture in particular has contributed to the emergence of a gun culture in the region. To illustrate the broad reaching impact of Western culture, he cited one example: Paul Richards’ research on the Sierra Leone and Liberian border area suggests that youth were shown Rambo videos on a VCR. Later, when they were working at a border checkpoint, they acted out what they saw in the movie. The impact of guns on youth culture is a central issue that needs to be addressed because African conflicts have often been fought by manipulated youth.

Another discussion thread focused on gun adoption in pastoral cultures. While the participants acknowledged that not all pastoral communities have adopted the gun as a means through which to rise in power (for example, the Zulu), it is necessary to consider the ways in which the introduction of the gun has affected how violence emerges in these communities on a case by case basis. One expert maintained that, before guns were introduced, many pastoral communities engaged in stylized raids where the rules of engagement were known and followed (another participant, however, noted that North Africa was an exception here). These communities knew how to manage violence. After
guns were introduced into these communities a transition occurred. Raids were now grounded in revenge and commercial interests, and there were no rules of engagement. Today, this situation still stands; guns have been part of the pastoralist tradition for so long that many consider them part of their culture. This expert asserted that – often – this gun culture emerges faster in warrior cultures than it does in other types of culture, but there was little further discussion on this point.

**Role of SA/LW in Conflict**

There was ample agreement that SA/LW should not be viewed in terms of causing a conflict. Instead, SA/LW should be seen as a conflict intensity multiplier and as a factor in creating other security problems which can last far longer than the actual conflict. To this end, the participants also discussed broader SA/LW and conflict issues. They pointed out two issues which need to be examined: SA/LW as an indicator of a conflict and SA/LW as a means to facilitate or prolong a conflict and impact prospects for long-term regional security and stability. On the first point, one expert suggested that the movement of SA/LW into a particular region can be a good indicator of conflict or impending conflict. Thus, it can serve as an early warning device. Two discussion threads emerged on the latter point: the broader impact of child soldiering and the outflow of SA/LW from conflict zones.

First, as part of a discussion on the role SA/LW play in facilitating conflict and their broad impact on the state of security, one expert emphasized the need to consider the problem of child soldiers, and in particular acknowledge the consequential impact of the uncontrolled proliferation of SA/LW for facilitating children’s participation – in some cases on behalf of the government – in conflicts because the weapons are small and relatively easy to use. The impact of child soldiering lasts far beyond the end of the conflict as these children struggle to rejoin the community after a conflict ends and may turn to violence to ensure their economic and social survival if services are not provided to them to assist them with reintegration.

Second, as most conflicts in Africa are intrastate ones, the outflow of SA/LW from conflict zones to other states is also an issue of concern. One disturbing phenomenon, as Carr’s paper points out, is that recent studies suggest that it is often at the end of a conflict (after peace breaks out) when SA/LW may outflow from a conflict zone to a peaceful one. Given this, most African state leaders realize that although they may not be facing a conflict in their particular state, they could face an influx of SA/LW across their state’s borders at some point in the future (especially if the state is located near a conflict zone), which could impact state security over the long-term.

**Inventory Issues**

In post-conflict African situations, many efforts are conducted to control SA/LW possession and collect, destroy, and/or secure weapons – particularly those held by civilians. There are also programs to help states secure and manage their weapons stockpiles in both times of peace and conflict. However, the experts suggested that these specific inventory control initiatives are not enough, whether conducted in times of peace or conflict. There are other dimensions to consider when addressing this control issue. Other groups that do not fall within these two categories may have stockpiles of weapons which are unsecured.
More broadly, the long life of weapons and ammunition must be considered in any effort to reduce the SA/LW threat; new weapons are only part of the problem. Though there was general agreement that these inventory issues need to be considered, experts cautioned against ignoring the demand element of the problem.

**Weapons Collection and Control Initiatives**

The participants, in particular, discussed the complexities associated with weapons control initiatives and deficiencies in SA/LW inventory controls associated with three groups: private security companies, national militias, and demobilized soldiers. While many programs have been conducted to improve civilian and state military awareness of the safety and security issues associated with weapons possession and inform them of best practices, weapons control is also an issue for other groups.11 Private security companies, for example, lack understanding on how to conduct proper inventory control practices. These deficiencies, as one expert discussed, are particularly concerning because voluntary principles on security rights govern their behavior. Likewise, national militias require further assistance in improving inventory control. One expert suggested that a low-level program focused on providing this management training could be very effective; currently, however, these programs are not in place.

Along the same lines, another participant emphasized that, though civilian weapons collection programs are prevalent in Africa (with some types being more effective than others), particularly in the immediate aftermath of a conflict, they are only one part of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) initiatives. In many cases, this expert suggested, the demobilization and reintegration elements of these initiatives often fall by the wayside, both due to lack of resources and lack of political will. This is concerning because demobilized soldiers likely still have their weapons (and the skills to use them). The situation worsens as time elapses and the state moves from a post-conflict to a post-post conflict situation. If proper demobilization does not occur, a threat from these groups could arise under certain circumstances. Complicating matters, the more time that elapses after the conflict, the less likely it is that control efforts will be sustained.

**Long Life of Weapons and Ammunition**

Although the participants agreed that arms trafficking was indeed a major issue contributing to the SA/LW threat in Africa, the security threat posed by weapons that have long been in the region cannot be ignored. These “old” weapons are still part of the inventory and if unsecured, can still pose a security threat and be used. Along this line, Carr pointed out in his paper that there is a general belief that if we stop new weapons transfers into the region, we can address the overall SA/LW problem in Africa. He asserts that focusing on the movement of new weapons will not completely alleviate the threat over the long term. SA/LW – particularly SA/LW from the Warsaw Pact era which have long been present on the continent – are built to last beyond the lifetime of the buyer. Given this, weapons will

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11 The Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the U.S. Department of State, for example, conduct a program that helps states that request it with physically securing and managing their state-owned stockpiles of SA/LW. To date, this program has operated in more than 21 African countries.
not become obsolete over time even though some actors may want new weapons. Nature (rust) will not make these weapons unusable.

Another expert took this point in another direction, asserting that this longevity concern also applies to ammunition. Expanding on this point, the expert further emphasized that ammunition is one of the areas of greatest seepage. He asserted that uncontrolled ammunition poses just as a great a threat as uncontrolled inventories of weapons and called for further attention to this issue, including more concerted efforts on marking and tracing to assist in better controlling these inventories. He emphasized that those efforts to control inventories of ammunition should not only focus on ammunition which has been destroyed, but also on ammunition that has not yet been (or won’t be) destroyed. He broadly suggested that there is a greater focus on managing and securing inventories of destroyed weapons than on destroyed ammunitions, though there are also security concerns associated with the latter category.

**The Details: Implications for U.S. Engagement**

The discussion of how the United States might engage on SA/LW issues in Africa highlighted the need for greater U.S. involvement. The participants discussed how general U.S. policies and engagement strategies on SA/LW have an impact on the activities it conducts in Africa and beyond and highlighted some ways that these policies and strategies might be strengthened to account for the complexities surrounding SA/LW issues. In most cases, this discussion of policy issues proceeded on a general level; implications for the Africa-specific environment might need to be explored further.

Additionally, the participants focused on how the United States might partner with other entities (whether in Africa or in some cases more broadly) to address the SA/LW threat. They also specifically discussed ways in which AFRICOM might assist in addressing SA/LW issues within its area of responsibility. Although there were no broad conclusions about what the United States’ engagement should specifically entail, the participants raised issues that strategic planners might consider as they work to develop such policies, strategies, and corresponding programs.

**Policy Issues**

Discussions of U.S. policy on SA/LW proceeded along several lines, including: the importance of policy in shaping programming for AFRICOM and other players in the region; the focus of U.S. policy; and the degree to which the Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) threat perception in particular should shape the United States’ overall policy on SA/LW. While all of these issues received varying amounts of attention, there was a general divide within the group on the importance of discussing policy issues at a meeting focused on defining the threat and identifying ways it could be manipulated through programming. There was a general preference among some participants to accept policy as a given (and a foundation for programming), while others preferred to discuss the implications of U.S. policy in shaping the international debate and action on SA/LW issues in greater depth. In all cases, however, the participants underscored the importance of political will in determining U.S. engagement on the SA/LW issues.
Focus of Policy

The participants highlighted the need to understand African perceptions of U.S. interests, policies, and activities in the region. There was some debate as to whether African countries view the United States with suspicion. While some participants focused on the United States as a welcomed honest broker in the region (albeit with a narrow window of opportunity to leverage this positive perception), others highlighted broader African suspicion of the West (one citing the UN Arms Trade Treaty negotiations as an example where this suspicion has manifested itself), even those countries (such as the United States) that do not have a colonizing history in the region.  

Policy Shifts

Several participants also discussed the shifts in U.S. policy over recent years and how this impacts how the United States engages on SA/LW issues. They were in general agreement that the United States, though a strong leader in helping countries on a bilateral basis to reduce and/or secure their state-owned SA/LW stockpiles, has not been as strong of a player at a multilateral level. However, as one participant pointed out, in recent months, there have been some subtle changes in the U.S. tone on SA/LW issues. One example of this shift is the recent announcement by U.S. negotiators that they were not going to block the UN Arms Trade Treaty, something that was previously threatened. This could suggest, as this expert pointed out, that the United States is taking a less hostile stance toward multilateral engagement.

The Way Ahead

These participants also discussed the focus of U.S. SA/LW policy and how it might be expanded and made more coherent. During the previous administration, policy was based primarily on gun control and many broader focused interagency working groups were abandoned. Additionally, most activities to address SA/LW were (and are) broken up across the interagency and do not fall under one umbrella. Most of the participants urged a shift away from a gun control perspective and more partnering across the interagency. Focusing on gun control can result in missing the core issues associated with SA/LW. Fragmented activities in the government can also result in ineffective programming on the ground.

As one expert suggested, as the new administration seeks to develop a coherent policy (a policy that another expert suggested should account for both values and interests in an aligned way) and strategy on this issue, it needs to focus beyond gun control issues and employ a holistic approach. To address the threat, the United States needs to know why

12 These issues of suspicion and the role of colonial pasts were also discussed in a broader context. The participants cautioned that the European history of colonizing Africa must be acknowledged, but there is a need to be careful not to assume that all European policies and programs are the same. On a bilateral level, as one expert suggested, there is some incoherence across Europe with regard to its Africa activities. The form these activities take may differ depending on if that particular European country colonized the African country the policy and program is addressing.

13 An example of this bilateral programming is the program that the Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the U.S. Department of State conducts that helps states that request it with Physical Security and Stockpile Management.
weapons are being used, what the demand is, and the broader impact of those weapons on security. The policy and strategy should also be based on a thorough understanding of what is happening on the ground and on what pressure points can be addressed through a particular policy. This expert further suggested that this engagement strategy might have four prongs: controlling illicit and legal supply; taking excess or obsolete weapons in stockpiles out of circulation; ending misuse; and addressing demand.

**Policy Implementation Issues**

Building on the previous discussion of an engagement strategy, there was general agreement that a nuanced approach was required to implement it. This need for nuance was demonstrated through a discussion of the difficulties associated with taking excess or obsolete weapons out of circulation and addressing demand. There was no consensus about how to approach these issues, but the participants did highlight some issues to consider.

One participant suggested that there is some practical difficulty in convincing governments in particular to destroy weapons they believe are essential. Further, views on weapons destruction may not be uniform across the government’s departments and agencies. For example, the civilian rulers may have different perspectives on stockpile and destruction issues than the military. This additional political element needs to be acknowledged when formulating strategies in this area.

The expert that suggested the engagement strategy underscored the importance of a nuanced approach to addressing demand issues. In particular, the planners and implementers of programs to address demand need to be careful not to trigger an arms race or take arms out of the hands of people, preventing them from countering insecurity that may result from weak bad governance. Within this same line, another expert recommended more analysis and data collection to define strategies to curb demand. It is not sufficient to only know the issues; without a deep understanding of them, one is unable to develop effective policies and strategies and activities to implement them.

This discussion of policy implementation also highlighted a broader issue. The participants acknowledged the need to consider the tradeoffs of incorporating SA/LW issues into broad-based development and counter-smuggling strategies and having stand-alone strategies and implementing initiatives. Though this question went unresolved, several participants noted that many U.S. agencies are struggling with this decision and its impact. The trade-offs, or at least the need to consider them, need to be acknowledged when formulating ways to structure an engagement strategy and corresponding programming.

**Centrality of MANPADS**

Building on a discussion of what motivates U.S. policy and activity in the SA/LW arena, some participants debated the degree to which the Man-Portable Air Defense Systems threat should shape the United States’ overall policy on SA/LW. The participants generally agreed that the potential that terrorists could use this particular weapons type has generated high interest in the upper echelons of the U.S. Government, but they debated whether this interest could be leveraged to encourage more action on reducing the threat associated with all types of SA/LW, including those in Africa. A related point of debate was whether
MANPADS were different enough from other types of SA/LW to warrant separate analysis and programming. In the end there was general agreement that linking them together this would be unwise. As one expert pointed out, MANPADS are a “red herring” when lumped into the SA/LW debate. Linking these two issues would reduce appreciation for the differences between weapons types (including who can use them and for what purpose) and the response needed to combat the weapons-related threats. These analytic complexities need to be acknowledged and addressed.

Partnering Opportunities

The discussion also focused on the ways in which the United States could partner with others to help reduce the threat of SA/LW in Africa. The participants pointed out several types of entities which could either partner with U.S. players working on the ground in Africa to conduct activities to meet a common objective or with whom the United States could engage at a higher level to reduce the global SA/LW threat. There was general agreement that opportunities with European allies, other states interested in Africa, African governments, Africans regional organizations, NGOs, and the United Nations might be explored further. To this end, the participants suggested specific ways the United States (and in some cases AFRICOM specifically) might engage with these players and generally agreed that cooperation is necessary to make good use of all capabilities that exist to reduce this threat.

However, the participants noted that partnerships should not be entered into lightly. It needs to be acknowledged, as one expert cautioned, that the formulation of such partnerships is context-dependent. In some cases, multilateral partnerships may be a good idea and sometimes it might not be a good idea. Additionally, when forming these relationships, research should be done ahead of time to ensure the interests and perceptions of each partner (including the African country involved) on both the partnership and the issues at hand are mutually understood and appreciated. The capabilities and strengths (including the comparative advantages) of each partner also need to be acknowledged as well as the need for continual engagement for long-term impact.14

European Allies

The participants underscored the importance of the United States having a transatlantic alliance with the Europeans to address African SA/LW issues and primarily discussed how a relationship with the Europeans might assist the United States in executing its SA/LW strategy more effectively in Africa. Most pointed to the lessons the United States can learn from the Europeans both on African countries in and of themselves and on SA/LW initiatives in general. The learning curve is steep, one expert suggested, and the United States needs to make use of the existing knowledge base to develop effective programs.

14 Several participants cited Operation Rachel, an arms destruction project involving Mozambique and South African partners, as an example of a low-cost but effective partnering initiative which may serve as a template for future efforts. Although this did not involve the United States, the project demonstrates the need for mutual interests and continuity of effort when developing these initiatives. In this case, the South African troops had the technology to locate and destroy weapons caches and the Mozambicans had the manpower and the general knowledge of the area to use the GPS systems effectively so each country’s strength was used to the greater good.
Another participant echoed this point and suggested that Europeans nations could also provide a platform to facilitate exchanges between African countries and the United States, especially those countries with which the United States does not have a direct and solid relationship and therefore the intent of its actions might be lost or viewed with suspicion (though another expert cautioned that even with the best of intentions and relationships, programs can go awry).

Other States Interested in Africa

One participant noted that in addition to leveraging European interests in Africa, the United States might also explore partnerships with other countries with an Africa interest. In particular, he advocated that the United States explore these opportunities and what could be gained from them and begin to map out the way forward in engaging with these countries. He cited that the United States might specifically explore ways to partner with Brazil and China.

African Governments

Several participants highlighted the need for the United States to work closely with African governments to execute SA/LW threat reduction issues. In most cases, their suggestions focused on things the United States could do to improve African government capacity to address its own SA/LW issues. They generally focused on three things: securing and/or destroying state-owned stockpiles; interdicting arms trafficking; and conducting SA/LW awareness programs.

Although, as previously stated, the United States has a bilateral program in assisting states at their request with securing and/or destroying state-owned SA/LW stockpiles which has been active in Africa, one expert suggested further engagement with African governments to explain the broad benefit of securing and/or reducing stockpiles. Noting that in many cases, African countries seek new inventories of weapons from the United States, another expert suggested tying demands to destroy or secure weapons to fulfilling these requests. For example, if a country wanted new weapons from the United States, old weapons in that country would need to be destroyed or secured. This type of programming would be low-cost, and it would provide jobs and infrastructure to the African country to do the destruction, thus having a broader benefit and impact.

The potential for the United States to assist with interdicting arms trafficking in Africa was also discussed, including a possible role for AFRICOM in supporting these efforts. An overall goal, as one participant noted, would be to increase the chances for interdiction at a local level through effective monitoring and intelligence. Another participant suggested that the United States might employ targeted sanctions, though a question exists as to how this might be done beyond a counter-terrorism realm. In all cases, he emphasized, individual-based targeting is most effective.

Likewise, the United States could also use existing awareness-based programming, as one expert suggested, to improve understanding of SA/LW dangers and the need to control their possession and use. They might leverage existing programs associated with broader humanitarian programming (including those conducted through AFRICOM). Education
programs with the youth might in particular be explored, but every effort needs to be made to ensure all programs, regardless of the target are sustained and timed appropriately.

**African Regional Organizations**

The discussion on how the United States can partner with African regional organizations did not focus exclusively on what the United States might gain from the partnership, but rather focused on what the United States might do with these organizations to improve their capacities to address SA/LW issues. In particular, one expert briefly discussed the Economic Community of West African States’ (ECOWAS) Convention on SA/LW and how this organization is a leader among the African regional organizations in addressing SA/LW issues. He suggested further that if this convention is successful, it could be a step forward and emphasized that AFRICOM might have a role to play in helping ECOWAS build capacity to implement it, including providing assistance with monitoring practices.

**NGOs**

Unlike the discussion of the prospects for the United States in partnering with regional organizations and its allies, the participants primarily focused on what the United States might gain from partnering with NGOs and what it might provide to this community. The discussion focused on two issues: the provision of quality research and data on SA/LW and leveraging NGOs to execute weapons collection programs. On the former point, as discussed previously, the participants strongly advocated that the NGO community be provided funding to conduct quality SA/LW data collection on the ground, due to both its access and capabilities, and engage in broader research endeavors. This information could be used by U.S. decision makers to formulate good policy.

On the latter point, several participants discussed the ways in which the NGO community has conducted successful civilian weapons collection programs in Africa. One participant suggested the Christian Council efforts in Mozambique as a success in this area. There was agreement that there may be lessons learned from these efforts which can be applied to other programming. One expert emphasized that this success suggested that military to military programs may not always be appropriate in every political context. This context needs to be understood. In cases, such as it was in Mozambique, where the people do not trust the military or the police, working through NGOs might be one way to get around these trust issues and increase the possibilities for successful initiatives.

**The United Nations**

The discussion of the potential for partnering with the United Nations (UN) also focused on mutual gains for both the United States and the UN. It proceeded along two lines: prospects for the Arms Trade Treaty and provision of data and advocacy of quality research. The former point was well discussed and debated though discussions did not focus particularly on Africa. The latter discussion was not Africa-specific either, but the discussions were less detailed. However, it was clear that these global initiatives would have an impact in the African context, given the severity of the SA/LW threat in the region.
The Arms Trade Treaty

On the former point, there was much debate about the potential for the UN ATT and specifically, the relative importance of the ways the United States is engaging in the dialogues and negotiations towards a treaty. It was generally agreed, as stated previously, that the United States has not been a great supporter of this treaty, though, as one expert pointed out, recent actions suggest the country is less hostile towards it than it was previously. Several pointed to the importance of the United States engaging in this debate, particularly as it relates to setting an example. One expert suggested that by the United States, an international power, blocking progress (as it did up until recently), it was effectively providing top cover for those other countries that did not want to play. However, the participants generally agreed that the treaty was not the be all and end all of international engagement on the issue, though it needs to be acknowledged as a core international initiative.

Overall, the participants generally agreed that this treaty has a long-term prospect of serving as an international standard (as there currently is not one) and, as one participant put it, encouraging the international community to understand that certain types of arms trade are unacceptable, thereby circulating a shared norm. However, most cautioned against putting all hope in this treaty and neglecting other practical ways SA/LW threats could be reduced, especially in the near and midterm. One expert surmised that it should only be viewed as one tool in the SA/LW foreign policy tool box.

This person suggested further that it might be wise for the international community – including the United States – to move away from signing more and more agreements and focus more on building capacity to and providing resources for implementing existing agreements. Another expert echoed that implementation is a key element, especially in the African context. It should not be taken as a given that a particular agreement will be implemented or that a particular country will have the resources and will to do so, both over the long and short term.

Building on this point later on in the discussion, one participant suggested that court systems need to be built up in Africa to help implement these laws on SA/LW transfer and possession being set up at an international level at a regional, national, and local level. However, as another participant pointed out, court systems are generally tied to the government in a particular country. If the government is corrupt, the court system will likely be too. If it suits interests, government officials may turn a blind eye and those breaking the laws will not be prosecuted. In this regard, broader corruption issues need to be addressed when discussing implementation of these agreements in the African context at a legal level.

Research and data

On the latter point involving research and the provision of data, one participant advocated for increased U.S. involvement in encouraging UN data collection activities while not reinventing the wheel. Specifically, the United States could encourage other countries to provide information to the UN Conventional Weapons Registry, which includes SA/LW, by providing information on itself and setting an example. Likewise, it could also encourage
other countries to voluntarily provide information on their SA/LW stockpiles to the UN database on defense expenditures.

Another area in which the United States could make a contribution is in encouraging quality UN research on SA/LW. One expert suggested that the United States might provide assistance in providing experts or studies or facilitating data collection initiatives. The United States might also show more vision to ensure recognized SA/LW experts are on UN panels directed to conduct SA/LW analyses. This would prove valuable as good research and analysis can have long-term impact and affect decisions.

**Implications for AFRICOM**

The participants underscored that although AFRICOM is a new form of U.S. engagement in the region and should consider ways it can support U.S. engagement on SA/LW issues in Africa, it should not be assumed that AFRICOM is the most appropriate player to engage on every dimension of the SA/LW issues or that it should be a major player. Nonetheless, a potential (even if limited) role for AFRICOM should be acknowledged and explored. Several participants emphasized that though engaging on SA/LW issues is not currently the highest AFRICOM priority, every effort needs to be made to increase the Command’s awareness of SA/LW issues, including how they intersect with other security issues in the region, as these specific issues might become more important to the Command in the future.

In preparing for this possibility, the participants underscored the need for providing quality research to the Command (as well as the broader community) on SA/LW issues. The Command needs to know the context of the specific SA/LW threats in Africa. Knowing the context will, as one expert suggested, help the Command determine where its interests lie and what the political will is to address the threat. The issues, the expert suggested, need to be properly binned, and pressure points need to be defined. From there, with proper data, AFRICOM can determine where it can support the overall U.S. engagement strategy on SA/LW issues in Africa.

The participants also broadly discussed ways in which AFRICOM might support U.S. engagement on SA/LW issues, including ensuring continuity of efforts, which is a defining intended feature of the Command. In particular, it was suggested that programs such as the Africa Partnership Station (APS) could be expanded to address SA/LW threats and support arms trafficking interdiction efforts. Within this discussion, some participants briefly mentioned how global programs such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (focused on countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), might be expanded to address SA/LW.

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15 It was mentioned that AFRICOM does not currently have one organization devoted to SA/LW issues, but it does currently consider them within the context of illicit trafficking, including narcotics. Within this context, several participants suggested that AFRICOM might develop an organization focused on SA/LW issues in the future.

16 Within this discussion, some participants briefly mentioned how global programs such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (focused on countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction), might be expanded to address SA/LW.
leverage its existing relationship with the U.S. European Command to address cross-continental trafficking of SA/LW.

Within the discussion AFRICOM programming expansion, several participants emphasized that additional research needs to be conducted to determine and develop measures of effectiveness for its programming. In particular, some help is needed to determine which metrics can be applied to demonstrate a program’s broad impact on African security, and how to get empirical evidence to support findings. One expert, refocusing the discussion on SA/LW in particular, pointed out that although using the number of SA/LW identified and destroyed as a metric for a program’s success is easy, a more nuanced approach may be warranted if AFRICOM begins to address SA/LW issues in its programming.

Though the participants enthusiastically discussed these potentials, several of them broadly cautioned that two areas need to be examined when determining roles for AFRICOM and appropriate ways for it to engage on SA/LW issues. In particular, the fact that other entities are better suited to do development, political, and diplomatic-related SA/LW activities than AFRICOM needs to be acknowledged. In many cases, these types of responses might be more appropriate to reduce the African SA/LW threat than military responses. Additionally, as several participants pointed out, there are authority limitations on AFRICOM’s actions on the continent. In particular, it can not develop policy, though as one participant pointed out, the Command does use the policy other U.S. players develop as a basis for its programs. Additionally, AFRICOM only has the authority to conduct military to military programming. That is, the Command focuses on programs which help Africans help Africans through military to military engagement and assistance. Within this context, one expert suggested that AFRICOM might help African militaries determine what types of firepower are needed for others to defeat those trafficking weapons.
Several recommendations on ways to conduct future research emerged from the discussions. They include the following (not listed in priority):

- Research on addressing the trade-offs associated with employing a holistic approach to analyzing and addressing SA/LW issues.
- Research on implications, challenges, and potentials associated with the United States partnering with other entities to address SA/LW issues in Africa.
- Research on determining and developing measures of effectiveness for U.S. Government SA/LW threat reduction programs, including appropriate ways to get empirical evidence that details how the programs are impacting security in Africa.
- Research to determine what activities are being conducted at an international, regional, national, and local level to address SA/LW threats in Africa and what is not being done.
- Research that involves on the ground data collection, surveys, and case studies of specific African countries and regions to support early warning and decision making.
- Research on the drivers for SA/LW possession and transfer in Africa and specific strategies that are needed to curb demand.
- Research on the points of intersection between SA/LW issues and broader African social issues.
- Research on the long-term prospects for the UN Arms Trade Treaty in addressing the global SA/LW threat and specifically the African threat.

This list represents a compilation of ideas for research writ large. The participants did not discuss the most appropriate sponsors/executors of the particular research topics.
APPENDIX: CHRISTOPHER CARR PAPER, “SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS PROLIFERATION IN AFRICA”

Note: The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. Air War College or the Department of Defense.

Introduction

All conflicts in Africa are in essence “small arms” conflicts. Even in the case of state-on-state warfare, there is little or no use of airpower, armor or artillery. Small arms and light weapons (SA/LW), in the hands of either state or non-state actors, are both the instrument of order and a root cause of insecurity on the continent and as such should be treated with the same degree of gravitas afforded to the presence of weapons of mass destruction on other continents.

In general, and particularly in Africa, SA/LW are subject to the “little and large” paradox. Because the weaponry itself is “small” there is a tendency to diminish the threat that it poses to security and social order. SA/LW are tactical instruments, therefore they cannot have a strategic significance. But in great numbers and in relation to other factors (weak government, poorly trained and equipped militaries, endemic physical insecurity, etc.), SA/LW become elevated from a tactical device to a strategic concern. However, the very numbers of weapons that are required to elevate the threat to the strategic level are, in themselves, a deterrent to addressing the issue of small arms proliferation. These “large” numbers of SA/LW, certainly in the millions if not tens of millions in Africa, induce a feeling that the problem has already passed beyond the possibility of control and that the threats and insecurities posed by SA/LW are simply part of the political, social and economic fabric of the continent.

SA/LW proliferation is not in itself the dominant security issue in Africa but it is, along with other problems, at the core of the insecurity dilemma on that continent. In many parts of Africa predatory governments, fractious tribal and ethnic groups, undisciplined militias and bands of pirates help to create an atmosphere of chronic instability. The small arms that are carried by these groups are most often instruments of repression, depredation and

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18 There are three possible exceptions to this statement: the Nigerian Civil War, the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the conflict between the apartheid regime in South Africa and Angolan forces. In each case, armor, artillery and airpower were used during the prosecution of the war. Nevertheless, all three of these conflicts were primarily infantry campaigns, with small arms being the predominant weaponry.

19 The figure of 100,000,000 small arms “circulating” in Africa has been propagated by a number of authors but there is no indication that this figure is the result of rigorous research. See Atanga, Lucien, in “Tackling Small Arms in Central Africa,” Paper 29, Bonn International Center for Conversion, Bonn, 2003, p 5, quoting from Salopek, Paul, “Leftover Arms Fuel Continent’s Ruinous Wars,” Chicago Tribune, December 23, 2001.

20 Addressing the issue of armed piracy of the Somali coast, the Prime Minister of Somalia, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmake, couched his dilemma in the following terms: “One of our biggest problems is that al-Shabaab (militia) has AK-47s, and the pirates have AK-47s, and the government has AK-47s.” By implication, the government did not have the firepower to overcome its rivals for power. “More Than $200M Pledged to Beat Somali Pirates,” CNN.com, April 24 2009.
intimidation. They are also representative of the lack of security that is omnipresent in much of Africa. In order to fill the vacuum of order and to provide for self-protection, individuals and groups arm themselves with SA/LW and thus a continuous street-level arms race takes place. People are made insecure by predatory armed groups against which they arm themselves. These predatory groups then increase their size and the intimidatory nature of their actions in response to the need to operate within an armed society. In order to break this cycle, the populace must have confidence in the ability of their governments to provide for their physical security in a comprehensive, fair and just manner. To encourage actions and policies that simply concentrate upon the disarmament of the general population without addressing the issue of the inability or unwillingness for governments to provide for the protection of their citizens is tantamount to alignment with the organs of repression in pursuit of a narrow goal of pacification and orderliness.

Bearing in mind the previous statement, there are certain actions that can be taken to manage the SA/LW proliferation issue in Africa that would not necessarily align external actors, including the United States, with the agents of either repression or chaos. The continent itself has produced some proposals and undertaken certain activities which should be studied and might be built upon in the future. Many of these initiatives have been stunted or overwhelmed by lack of resources, and in this respect, a long-term commitment of funds and personnel by such as AFRICOM could reap some benefits by reviving moribund programs or invigorating tired efforts at de-weaponization. In this vein, it is important that external actors listen more than they speak on matters relating to the SA/LW issue. As histories of SA/LW control are related by indigenous personnel, the listener must always be aware of the possibility of hidden agendas, sub-texts and corrupt practices. But they should also be aware of the complex skein of social and economic issues that only local knowledge can relate to matters involving SA/LW. For example, talking to an officer of the Ugandan army in Kampala about the problem of Karimojong cattle raiding will produce, through multiple levels of ethnic, tribal, clan and historic filter, a viewpoint and response that is informed (and prejudiced) in a way that most outsiders could never hope to achieve. Finding the few objective analysts on security matters in Africa is the holy grail, but suitable individuals can be trained and educated to analyze information so that they can extract useful data from indigenous peoples without becoming hostage to the subjective elements that color that information.

The Problem

The major problem with SA/LW proliferation in Africa is that most of the arms that are creating endemic insecurity are already present on the continent. Certainly, arms and ammunition flow into Africa from the outside world on a daily basis, but even if such a flow were to be stopped, there are still enough SA/LW in Africa to affect security for the foreseeable future. Modern small arms, particularly those designed and manufactured in the old Warsaw Pact countries, have a remarkable capacity to survive climate, mishandling and negligible maintenance. This author has witnessed (in Mozambique) rifles caked in mud and rust that have been hosed down with water, dunked in motor oil and have emerged with

21 See Chap 6 in Carr, Christopher, “Kalashnikov Culture”, Praeger, Westport, CT, 2008. This text was used for much of the material to be found in this work.
the same lethal capacity as when they first left the factory. When weapons do break they are cannibalized for parts or are fixed in bush workshops with wire and by open-hearth welding. Similarly, ammunition, which is nominally more perishable (primers decay and powder can deteriorate) can also survive, in respect to time and conditions, for multiple decades and still be lethal. The notion that time and temperature will settle the SA/LW problem in Africa is proving to be a false premise and cannot be relied upon in the future as solution to SA/LW proliferation.

Nobody knows how many small arms are held in Africa. Many of the weapons were shipped into the continent during the wars of liberation and the civil wars of the post-colonial era. Conditions at that time did not lend themselves to inventory control and often there was no accounting who had received weapons. In Mozambique, for example, rallies were held during the civil war at which rifles and machine guns were simply handed out to the crowd. Even in the case of national military and police forces there is very little inventory control and the “leakage” of official weapons into the hands on sub-state actors has been an enduring issue when addressing SA/LW control problems. Any attempt to engage in retrieval of SA/LW or the de-weaponization of communities must begin with the awareness that success cannot be weighed in terms of numbers of weapons retrieved and destroyed but must be considered in terms of whether the populace at large feel more secure as the arms disappear from their communities.

Skeptics on the matter of whether SA/LW pose a real threat to African security might be muted by the phenomenon of the contagion effect. This is where arms from one conflict move into other areas or states and create their own conflict conditions. This movement might be because of the surplus of arms in the original conflict zone but, perhaps more ominously, it might be because peace has broken out in the original conflict zone and, principally for economic reasons, the arms are being sold to new customers. This contagion effect can be seen most transparently in the case of West Africa, where arms from the Liberian conflict moved into Sierra Leone and on to Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire and Nigeria. In this manner the outbreak of peace can act as the harbinger of further conflict within a region. This problem can be mitigated by effective weapons de-commissioning programs at the termination of a conflict but this can only occur if the armed groups feel secure and if there is sufficient financial incentive to get them to hand in their weapons rather than to sell them on the open market.

Even if the major problem is the unquantifiable numbers of extant SA/LW in Africa, there is still an issue of arms and ammunition flowing into the continent from external sources on a continuing basis. These arms increase or replenish government-held stocks, are sold to militia groups and other sub-state actors and are transferred to individuals in market places such as the Cir-toogte in Somalia. Sometimes these arms are transferred directly into zones of conflict and in defiance of international sanctions. The prolonged Great Lakes conflict in central Africa and the even more lengthy conflict in the Horn of Africa have created an

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22 Observed at a collection center in Maputo, June 2001.
23 Interview at Tools For Arms Project, Maputo, Mozambique, 2001.
24 Carr, Chap 7.
entrepreneurial class which specializes in the trade in arms and which is sustained by partners in the arms producing states, experts on the paperwork required to move arms to embargoed areas, transport specialists and investors willing to underwrite the trade. Sometimes these transactions are “gray” in nature, with the support of venal state officials facilitating the transfers of arms through the provision of false end-user certificates (EUCs), or sometimes they are “black-market” transactions, in which all the activities are criminal and clandestine. Often the arms are traded for commodities, the most notorious example being the arms-for-coltan swaps which took place during the Great Lakes conflict in the late 1990s and early 2000s.26

Arms trafficking into Africa has proven lucrative to many over the past two decades. States such as Bulgaria and Serbia, with very little in the way of exportable goods after the collapse of communism, were (and are) very willing to flout international law and world opinion in order to maintain their small arms industrial base. Certainly, Bulgaria has exerted government control over arms transfers as a result of pressure from NATO and the EU but the profits to be made from clandestine arms transfers have often overwhelmed censure from those organizations. Similarly, the collapse of the USSR and its eastern European satellites caused the release of fleets of cargo aircraft and littoral shipping which have provided the necessary transport for arms transiting into and within Africa. The now-detained Viktor Bout played a significant role in this air bridge into Africa, resulting in the United Nations issuing multiple warrants for his arrest for sanctions busting.27

The arms trade into the Horn of Africa has an international element but the re-supply route that has proved most enduring is from Yemen and into Puntland, Somaliland and Somalia. The arms culture of Yemen, with its open markets and knowledgeable sellers and buyers, has proven to be an almost inexhaustible source for the warring factions in Somalia. Using money from their aberrational economic activities, which includes traditional and electronic-age piracy, the militias in Somalia and their suppliers in Yemen have created a complex network which includes aircraft flying into unprepared strips, ships transiting the Gulf of Aden, truck convoys, donkey trains and female bus passengers secreting arms and ammunition on their persons.28

The gray and black-markets in arms is an international rather than African problem. But the impact of the trade is most clearly seen in Africa and policies and programs that could be applied in Africa could also, if successful, be propagated globally. The policies and priorities of the past U.S. administration did not make the control of the trade in SA/LW a priority and indeed were the prime movers in inhibiting the formulation of a comprehensive response to the problem. This position, perhaps best indicated by the role played by the U.S. delegation at the 2001 UN conference on the illicit trade in small arms, has led to a general belief that the United States is not seriously concerned or interested in controlling the proliferation of SA/LW.29 Although this level of policy is beyond the remit of this paper, perhaps the most effective way that the United States can signal that it takes this issue

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26 See Carr, p 49.
28 Carr, 42-3.
29 Carr, p 133.
seriously is to sponsor, either at the United Nations or at another venue, a conference that would result in binding commitments by all the participants to a control regime specifically designed to control the illicit trade in small arms. Organizations such as AFRICOM would then have a clear mission and mandate with which to confront the SA/LW problem in Africa.

**Approaching the Problem**

The problem of SA/LW proliferation in Africa must be approached at a continental, regional, national and sub-national level. There is no single point of leverage or vulnerability which can be exploited to “solve” the SA/LW proliferation problem. Political will is an issue within the continent but most state leaders recognize the threat posed by uncontrolled SA/LW proliferation in Africa and have either individually or collectively attempted to address the issue. Absent a global agreement and an Africa-wide initiative, there are a number of multilateral agreements which should be studied (as much for their deficiencies as their successes.) The two most important of these agreements are the Moratorium on Small Arms In West Africa, ratified in 1998 and extended thereafter, and the Nairobi Protocol on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, signed in 2004. These are both concerned with trafficking but the former also stresses the retrieval and destruction of arms and within its narrow mandate has proven relatively successful.

There are few examples of bilateral cooperation on SA/LW matters but there is one relationship, between South Africa and Mozambique, that is worth studying and perhaps emulating. This program, known as the “Rachel” operations, was the result of a perception by both countries that the small arms situation in one country, Mozambique, was having a discernible effect upon the security of the other, South Africa. During the late 1990s the government of South Africa was confronted with a level of armed crime within its borders that threatened to undermine the authority of the state. Many of the arms were traced to caches in Mozambique but the authorities in that country stated that they were unable to track the flow of arms within their country and that they did not have the resources to identify and destroy the arms caches within Mozambique. In response to this, South Africa promised funding and support for find-and-destroy operations if the Mozambicans would provide manpower and intelligence. This relationship proved to be useful and enduring. Even after the operations moved away from the South Africa-Mozambique border area the authorities in Pretoria continued to support the “Rachel” activity, with financing acquired from diverse sources including European governments. By using agents with GPS units to find and map caches and with teams destroying arms in place, the “Rachel” series is the most successful bilateral SA/LW enterprise on the continent and should provide a useful blueprint for other such operations. However, if funding had been more consistent and

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reliable the “Rachel” series could have been even more useful and if transport (ground and air) had been more available then more caches might have been destroyed.

Destruction in place is a key to these types of operations. As long as arms remain intact they remain potentially recyclable. Even if they are removed to destruction centers the weapons can go missing or their parts can be cannibalized. In the “Rachel” operations the weapons have traditionally been destroyed in place with explosives but there are also mobile shops where weapons are sawn or bent into destruction. This is low technology but funds for equipping and training these facilities have always been in short supply in Mozambique and elsewhere.

One form of SA/LW management is the use of buy-back or buy-in programs. This has been achieved in parts of Africa, with varying results. Often this takes the form of a cash payment pegged to the type and serviceability of the weapon, but other ventures have included exchanging utilitarian products, most often bicycles and sewing machines, for arms. Most often the arms that have been retrieved in this manner are elderly and often non-functioning devices, but the program still has possibilities under certain conditions. The United Nations engaged in a pilot program in Gramsh, Albania, in which arms were exchanged for work on infrastructure elements such as the building of roads.\textsuperscript{32} This might be appropriate in parts of Africa and this could expand the spectrum of buy-in possibilities.

In the matter of the shipment of illicit and illegal arms into and around the continent the issue of resources and available technology is again a factor. In the Great Lakes region, as in most of Africa, there are innumerable air strips that fall outside the control of any government agency and which have been used by arms traffickers during the conflict. There is no radar coverage here and elsewhere in Africa and even if there is some official presence at an airport it most often is part-time and poorly equipped and trained. Availability of radios and other forms of communication is strictly limited (although cell phones coverage is remarkably omnipresent in Africa) and military, police and customs authorities are not agile enough to respond to reports of trafficking activity. Many UN reports on trafficking activity into zones of conflict in Africa have highlighted the fact that pilots flying arms into the Great Lakes region are undeterred by the prospect of government intervention into their business and that most of problems relate to the unworthiness of their aircraft (many planes do not have airworthiness certificates.) Some of their cavalier attitude is bolstered by the high level of corruption amongst military personnel and officials within the region but it is also based on the foreknowledge that any state agency that might wish to intercept them simply does not have the resources to do so.

A proportion of the SA/LW problem in Africa can be laid at the feet of armed forces of the African states. Poor or non-existent inventory control invites corruption and seepage out of government stockpiles and armories. At best, this means that weapons acquired by national governments end up on the black-market. At worst, as with sacking of the armory at Moroto barracks in Uganda in 1979, it can precipitate a radical change in the nature of conflict within a region.\textsuperscript{33} Very few African military and paramilitary forces have the funds

\textsuperscript{32} Faltas, Sami and Paes, Wolfgang-Christian, “You Have Removed the Devil from Our Door”: An Assessment of the UNDP Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Project in Albania, BICC, Bonn, October 23, 2003.

\textsuperscript{33} Carr, p 73.
for computers and software to police their inventories and as a result there is no culture of accountability within these organizations. If inventory control was such that it would result in the disciplining of lax or corrupt officials then it is possible that the *laissez-faire* attitude that often prevails over lost equipment might be changed.

**A Role for AFRICOM**

As indicated above, most of the issues relating to controlling the proliferation of SA/LW in Africa are resource related. Certainly, corruption and inefficiency play a role in the facilitation of the movement of arms in Africa but, even with a high level of political will and a willingness on behalf of security forces to engage the problem, the lack of resources makes such commitment moot. Even if AFRICOM does not sit at the head of the high table of COCOM resource allocation, a little can go a long way in Africa. The technology and funding required to make inroads into the SA/LW problem are not complex or deep. But what is important is that programs, once in place, continue for the length of their efficacy. This type of continuity of action is most often absent in Africa, either because of shifts in the wind of political change or because funding is lost or diverted.

Well-developed and articulated research on the SA/LW problem in Africa is lacking. AFRICOM could play a useful role in fostering and supporting academic and non-governmental researchers who would be willing to undertake this task, particularly those on the continent itself. During the 1990s, a small cadre of researchers was concerned with this topic but the momentum and impetus dissipated as the multilateral approach to control became stymied and research funds dried up.

The SA/LW issue is large enough in its own right, complex enough in its manifestations and idiosyncratic enough in its activities to demand a separate and discrete oversight and control activity. It should not be bundled with problems such as counter-terrorism, drug trafficking or piracy, even though it is a facet of all these issues. Employing a small group of specialists to permanently concentrate on SA/LW proliferation could pay early and useful dividends in terms of demonstrating AFRICOM’s seriousness towards the problems of the region. Even if AFRICOM itself may not be convinced that SA/LW proliferation is one of the core issues, African governments see it as such and deliberate action taken to address the matter would provide a useful signal of intent by the United States.

If AFRICOM can provide the necessary personnel, training, technology and funding for a number of successful counter-proliferation programs in Africa then this will not only serve to facilitate greater security in the region but will also significantly enhance the image of the United States on the continent.