



T&T MUN 2024



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Position Paper Expectations

- a. 1 Page
- b. Times New Roman 12pt font
- c. 1-inch margins
- d. Header
 - i. Committee:
 - ii. Delegation:
 - iii. Name, School
- e. Paragraphs:
 - i. Background of the issue (based on background guide)
 - ii. Country stance / past United Nations actions (what has your country and the UN done about the issue)
 - iii. Proposed solutions (how do you and your country think this issue should be solved)



Letter to Delegates

Hello Delegates,

My name is Charlotte Izadi and I am a senior at La Jolla Country Day School. For two years, MUN has been an enriching part of my high school experience which is why I am enthralled to be your leader for this arms dealing committee. I look forward to collaborating and deliberation over this grave issue in committee. Thank you for taking the time to participate! I can't wait to meet you all. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via email at charlotte.izadi@ljcds.org.

Best regards,

Charlotte Izadi



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to GA: Arms Dealing in South America! My name is Ria Loomba and I am a junior at La Jolla Country Day School. I am fortunate to be a part of Torrey MUN for 2 years, and I am so excited to chair GA with Charlotte. I look forward to what each of you brings to the table during committee. Outside of school, I enjoy hanging out with my friends, playing indoor and beach volleyball, and watching movies! We are thrilled to share this experience with you and please feel free to reach out with any questions; my email address is ria.loomba@ljcds.org.

Sincerely,

Ria Loomba



Note from both of us:

We encourage you to think deeply about your country's political, social, and economic factors that lead them to the degree of involvement in arms dealing in South America. Please come to the committee prepared to discuss (and resolve) the issue at hand. We can't wait and are so excited to meet you all and see what you plan for your country!

Note: A heavy emphasis on grading your position paper will be put on how well you explain and convince us of your proposed resolution. That is, we strongly recommend that your solutions are the longest and strongest part of your position paper. Not only will that let us know your delegation's views, but it let us know how well you understood and deeply thought about how to resolve the issue. Happy writing, and again please contact us with any questions.



Introduction

The illegal arms trade in South America has long been a source of concern, leading to high levels of drug trafficking and organized crime. Key suppliers include the United States, Russia, and various European countries, with the U.S. being a major contributor. The trade's history stems back to European imperialism and the Cold War era. Supply and demand only grow each year, so the illegal arms trade only proliferates with time. Collective government efforts by South America have thus far failed and there is little cooperation between countries and their leaders.

Organized crime groups are both distributing and purchasing a large part of illegal arms funneled into South America. Oftentimes, many weapons are left unaccounted for or illegally diverted by corrupt corporations or even governments. Many supplier nations such as those of Europe and America greatly benefit from the trade and those who purchase illegal arms as well, oftentimes organized crime syndicates. Those who suffer at the hands of this deeply rooted, complex, illegal system are the people, normal people just trying to get by in these vulnerable nations.

These developments have led South America and especially Colombia and surrounding nations, to be detrimental when it comes to economic and political stability. The illegal arms trade perpetuates violence and crime in South America, also directly enabling the illegal drug



trade and other types of trafficking. Immediate steps towards regulation and control of illegal arms are essential for a better future in the region.



Topic Background

For a long time, South America has been a hub of illegal international arms dealing from various markets across the globe. This contributes to high levels of drug trafficking and other organized crime, facilitated by the exchange of arms. Recently, INTERPOL and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recovered around 200,000 illegal firearms smuggled into Europe from South America. An estimated 45-80 million illegal arms are circulating South America right now. Many flooded in during the Central American wars of the 1980s and never stopped. For example, Soviet guns flowed into Cuba under Mikhail Gorbachev and the United States used Israel to supply the Contras, a right-wing Nicaraguan rebel group following the Nicaraguan Revolution. Due to globalization, arms trade during these South American Independence Wars has transformed South American commerce and created lasting consequences in the region.

The reason the arms trade has gained so much success is because there remains a high supply and high demand. Nations like the United States, France, China, Germany, and Russia easily provide arms to nations including but not limited to Uruguay, Paraguay, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Colombia. The United States is the key supplier, making up a large majority of illegal arms in South America. Russia is also a major supplier, especially for Nicaragua where sales are growing rapidly. Russia's involvement is a legacy of the Cold War because Americans and the Soviets supplied arms to their respective satellite countries as a way to run proxy wars.

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These imports from the United States and Europe make up almost all the small arms being trafficked. Other European countries are major arms suppliers as well as Belgium, the Czech Republic, Israel, Italy, and Spain. Also, due to its coastal location, South Africa can easily supply South America with arms across the ocean. There is a consistent flow of weapons from North America to the South across the U.S.-Mexico border. The triple border of Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina is a highly lucrative smuggling region. There lie hundreds of trafficking routes across the continent, a highly organized and sophisticated network of trade. The sea route through Panama is also a major maritime pathway.

In many ways, the international system thus far has failed South America, and the illegal arms trade represents a large facet of that. South American regionalism as well as the geostrategic orientation of many suppliers remain s at the forefront of these issues. While the illegal arms trade is obviously directly tied to illegal arms, there is a larger picture of political destabilization and imperial outreach that directly led to the instability in the region. For example, after the CIA assassinated democratically elected Guatemalan president Guzmán to protect the profits of the United Fruit Company, Guatemala fell into decades of brutal U.S. backed regimes that committed genocide and enabled mass corruption. The United States single handedly thrust Guatemala into instability and political and societal fragmentation which has since allowed the illegal arms trade to flourish and take hold in an especially vulnerable country.



And recently, due to regulation changes, U.S. gun sales have doubled in recent years fueling even more instability in a country the supplier is responsible for fragmenting.

Although the production of small arms is less frequent than trade from other countries, it is on the rise locally in some Latin American countries. Production of small arms takes place in Chile, El Salvador, Brazil, Colombia, and Honduras. Regional arms production remains small, but it is on the rise, and yet another way illegal arms are created and distributed. Arms trafficking to these regions stems all the way back to colonial times and represents a branch of European imperialism still very much alive and thriving today. During the Cold War, the USA and the USSR supplied $\frac{2}{3}$ of all arms to under-developed states. Powerful states such as the U.S. have so much power in the illegal arms trade, that they are able to stop global conflicts by placing embargoes on gun exports. Now, the trade has proliferated like never before, with supply and demand constantly coming in bigger and bigger waves. Now, illegal arms which end up in South America, specifically Colombia and proxy states, are overwhelmingly ending up in the hands of organized crime groups and gangs, perpetuating violence and cycles of corruption.

After the civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, thousands upon thousands of weapons were not accounted for and ended up fueling the black market trade which is another source of illegal arms in the wider region. In more recent years, homicide rates, 60% caused by illegal arms in South America, have increased drastically. Complicity by corrupt



government officials who divert arms into the illegal market is another source. For example, 3000 AK-47s were purchased by a Nicaraguan company and subsequently diverted to a Colombian paramilitary group. Various documented cases in countries like Venezuela, Guatemala, and Panama showcase the corruption in the military, government, and security forces that facilitate the diversion of arms to crime syndicates in various South American nations. Weapons diversion also appears to be unfolding within security companies. For example, Brazil's Federal Police reported that 12,000 weapons were either stolen or marked missing from private stockpiles in a four year period.

The largest and most organized arms dealing center is Colombia which is centered in this conflict; there is an arms race between rebels, the government, and private citizens. Not only do arms dealing directly contribute to higher homicide rates and armed conflict, but it also contributes to other major issues the continent is fighting such as drug and human trafficking. Illegal arms enable these practices to continue. Arms are lost, stolen, trafficked, and smuggled every single day, contributing to a myriad of other problems in the region. For example, guns have gained a status as a form of currency between gangs, using illegal arms in local crimes. It causes increased firearm homicides and gang violence. The flow of weapons has also directly contributed to increases in cocaine production by violent groups. It creates and expands illegal markets and facilitates an array of other criminal activities.



The weapons trade is extremely lucrative and, therefore, extremely popular. But it contributes to violence, human rights violations, crime and terror, and political destabilization. Gun violence has also held back economic development in the region, so it is necessary to change for a more hopeful future. There have been decades of unhindered proliferation of the issue, burdening local communities, hindering development, and discouraging investment. The issue needs to be tackled on all levels: local, regional, and international. Weapons collection programs have been futile in the fight against the arms trade. Governments need to seek control of weapons, destroy stockpiles, handle misuse, and manage demand in their nations as well as for the continent as a whole. Intelligence is needed on trafficking problems and smuggling routes and transnational cooperation is needed to handle the issue effectively.

It is also of paramount importance to keep in mind that the illegal arms trade is a part of a larger system of imports and exports in which illicit goods move across borders, oftentimes facilitated by the complex geopolitics of South America, and especially the area in and around Colombia. An important connection to make is the intersection of the illegal arms trade with the illegal drug trade. To enable one is to enable both and to combat one is to combat both simultaneously. Production and distribution of drugs is only a reality because of illegal arms used by organized crime groups that deal drugs. Another facet of South America that is essential to understanding the wider picture surrounding illegal arms trade is that the region lacks any



meaningful cooperation between countries. Organized crime beats out unorganized governments. Geopolitics of South America are the foundation of the illegal arms trade and enable it as well. For example, in nations like Peru and Colombia, the arms are part of a larger struggle over extractive economics and repressive politics. Illegal arms trade ends up affecting not only crime and violence, but economic development and political instability as well, profoundly affecting the lives of millions within the borders which is why steps towards regulation and control of illegal arms are immediately necessary for a better world.



Key International Players

Colombia

Colombia is a major player in the global realm of arms dealing. Oftentimes, weapons are smuggled in from Europe or the United States and sold to parties such as gangs or rebels which contributes to the instability and violence in Colombia. Colombia is very vulnerable to arms dealing due to its location and involvement in the world of drug dealing and smuggling. Illegal arms dealing promotes Colombia's two largest issues: the drug trade and human trafficking. There are a myriad of illegal actors at work in Colombia and the country has a highly sophisticated and large criminal network that enables the illegal arms trade.

Peru

Peru has a long history of illegal arms dealing, especially in conjunction with other nations. For example, Peruvian rebels allegedly supplied Colombia's FARC Rebel group with guns. Peru both buys and sells in the arms trade. Illegal groups and government corruption facilitate the practice. However, more recently Peru has undertaken efforts to control this illicit activity such as working with the UN Regional Center for Peace, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America (UNLIREC) and training officers to combat the illegal trafficking of weapons and ammunition.

Chile

Chile gets a lot of its illegal arms from Argentina and its criminal dynamics have become concerning, although Chile is far from being a "narco-state." Firearms are smuggled in from the United States, Europe, and Asia through the sea. The flow of these weapons into Chile extends far, eventually flowing past Chile into other nations such as Ecuador and Colombia. Although Chile is safer than most countries in the region, there is growing concern over increased homicide rates caused by firearms in recent years. There has been an insurgence of weapons coming into Chile from its Northern ports that are a reason for concern and have attracted attention.

Venezuela

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Venezuela is a hub for illegally trafficked weapons. The weapons enter through illegal stockpiles, the United States, and other surrounding nations like Colombia and Brazil. The circulation of these weapons is widespread and contributes to other crimes in Venezuela such as human trafficking, drug dealing, and money laundering. Although the United States has prohibited arms sales to Venezuela, that has done nothing to stop illegal arms sales to the country. Guns are also used as a form of currency in Venezuela, often exchanged for food and supplies because of the shortages. Overall, the illegal gun trade has negatively affected Venezuela's economic development, armed violence, and public health.

Argentina

Argentina is one of the countries at the forefront of the global illegal arms trade at the moment. Argentina acts as both a buyer and supplier in the region, providing a steady flow of weapons to many nations as well as itself. Due to its location, it serves as a direct link to Europe and can obtain weapons from the continent. However, more recently, authorities in Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay have been working together to attempt to stop the criminal groups facilitating the illegal practice. Progress has been limited, but there seems to be more initiative by the government to combat the issue.

Brazil

Brazil has one of the highest homicide by weapon rates in the entire world and almost half of the firearms in circulation are illegal. There are an estimated 7-8 million illegal weapons currently in the country. Criminals can obtain weapons in many ways, whether it be smuggling or government stockpiles. There is no shortage of illegal weapons and the United States is its biggest supplier. In the past, there have been large-scale efforts by the federal police in Brazil to disrupt the trade but results have been limited. A large chunk of the illegal arms are funneled right to drug traffickers and affect mostly the slums known as favelas. Brazil is also involved in the illegal arms trade in many surrounding South American countries, both providing and receiving for them in mass amounts.

France

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France is a major European and international exporter of arms. While much of its business is done legally, much is also done illegally by smugglers to regions all over the world including South America. France plays a key role in funneling illegal arms into Latin American countries like Argentina on the coast which subsequently funnel the arms inland across the continent. In April of 2021 officials in Lyon, France seized thousands of illegal arms which led to more seizures all across Latin America.

United States

The United States is the main source of illegal arms heading into South and Central America. The U.S.-Mexico border is a major entry point with an estimated 2000 illegal arms smuggled across daily. Because firearms are accessible in many American states, they are more easily obtained, taken southward, and distributed to various international actors such as gangs, civilians, and governments. More than half of illegal arms found in South America are traced back to the United States. There is a constant and large-scale “iron river” of guns being transported from America to the entirety of South America. The military-grade weapons manufactured in the U.S. are highly desired by cartels, and once in South America are easily transported across multiple borders to reach a destination. There have been legislative attempts to cede this illegal exchange of arms but results have been largely unsuccessful because the practice is still prosperous. Additionally, it is in America’s best interest to stop the practice because it is a national security threat, enabling the drug trade that not only affects Mexicans, but a large number of Americans as well.

Mexico

Due to Mexico's proximity to the United States, a major supplier of arms, Mexico both receives and serves as a center for arms distribution south. Every day, around half a million weapons enter Mexico illegally from the U.S., mostly across the southern land border. They supply drug cartels and other actors in the illegal arms trading world. These arms are a large cause of crime and violence in Mexico, fueling human trafficking and the drug trade. They also contribute to Mexico's large-scale issue with violence. There have been efforts to stop the practice like a lawsuit against American gun manufacturers, but the problem remains. Both the U.S. and



Mexican governments are working on the issue, sometimes together, but a final or clear solution has not been reached.

Israel

Israel is a major hub of illegal arms, many of which go into and are from the Middle East. However, Israel is also a source of illegal arms for South America. Many groups in Colombia, Panama, and Guatemala require a constant supply of arms, many of which come from Israel or are traced back to Israel. Israel also sells arms to Central American nations like Honduras, Argentina, and El Salvador. Around 1/3-1/2 of all Israel's arms sales are funneled into Latin America.

Suriname

Suriname is a transit area for arms dealing, primarily for Brazilian arms trafficking rings. Weapons, as well as drugs and gold, are also transported from Venezuela and end up in Suriname on their way to Brazil. Consider how Suriname's location could be an advantage or disadvantage to arms trafficking.

Bolivia

Bolivia is mainly a transit zone to move illegal arms from the United States to Brazil. In 2013, the Bolivian government broke up a large Brazilian arms ring, showcasing that this country plays a role in the transportation of arms. Also in 2013, Bolivia implemented its first gun control law, assisting the security forces in lowering the organized crime rate. Bolivia's proximity to Brazil also makes the country vulnerable to Brazilian arms violence and trafficking.

Ecuador

Ecuador is another country that serves as an arms dealing route in South America. In 2021, the Ecuadorian government found that arms were being transported from Chile and Peru up into Ecuador at its southern border. There are tight laws around purchasing weapons: you must pass a psychological evaluation, and a drug test, and be over the age of 25 to receive a licensed

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certificate to handle arms. Despite these rules, arms from the US and Mexico are still smuggled in and sold on the grey market and distributed to local gangs and other drug cartels.

Guyana

Guyana has made a rather large effort in reducing the illegal arms trade in their country. In 2022, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) as well as the Government of Guyana held a 3-day course on a national plan of action for the reduction of arms trafficking. However, it is still a transit location, with Brazil bordering it to its south.

Uruguay

Uruguay has high rates of legal gun ownership; that fact, along with its location between Argentina and Brazil, allow it to be a major transit state for illegal trafficking. In 2022, a large arms trafficking ring was dismantled, exposing Uruguay as a hub for the arms trade. Despite the government's efforts to shut it down, there continues to be illicit arms activity in the country.

Paraguay

Paraguay recently launched a joint initiative with the US and Brazil to uncover over 400 arms in its state that were part of a major trafficking ring in December of 2023. This revealed that over 45,000 weapons were illegally transported to Paraguay under the company name of International Auto Supply (IAS). These arms are said to have been transported from Europe and Turkey. How will this affect the rest of South America, and how will you keep Paraguay safe from other outside, international arms influences and threats?

Russia

Between 2015-2019, a small 0.8% of arms in South America were from Russia. Now, its involvement has grown and influenced more purchases in South America. Russia's involvement is perceived as an affront to U.S. domination of the region in terms of arms sales. Venezuela has been Russia's largest consumer of arms in the entire western hemisphere with Nicaragua following very close behind. Peru, Brazil, and Mexico are also large consumers of military weapons directly from Russia. While most of these arms sales are considered "legal" because they



are via the state, many of these weapons end up in the wrong hands due to corruption and the diversion of weapons.

Nicaragua

Given the history of Nicaragua's relationship with the United States after the Iran-Contra Affair, Nicaragua has now become a hub for legal and illegal weapons. Some small arms are also made in Nicaragua. Furthermore, Nicaragua serves as a starting point for trafficking to Costa Rica and Mexico. Corrupt members of the government, police, and military also facilitate cross-border exchange of arms.

Cuba

Similar to Nicaragua, Cuba's issues with arms dealing date back to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Although that issue dealt with nuclear weapons, their smaller weapons trade remain discreet compared to other countries. However, since Cuba is an island, the demand for illegal arms is much lower than in other countries on the mainland. As a smaller, less involved country, think about how you can act as a catalyst or a peacemaker in decisions that are made in other South American countries.

Panama

Panama is the main port of entry of illegal arms from the United States to South American countries. The black market developed under the banning of arms between 2011 and 2019. Furthermore, arms are able to be transported via boat or canoe to other countries with coastal ports and cities. Many people in Panama are involved, including government officials, military personnel, private companies, and criminal networks.

El Salvador

El Salvador has tried to make an effort to stop the spread of illegal arms dealing by passing multiple laws. However, the primary arms brokers are ex-military personnel who have gained access to these arms. The United States Military also has one "cooperative base" in El Salvador,



which also facilitates the leakage of guns into South American countries. Almost all of their arms are American made.

Honduras

Political instability is what facilitates black and grey market trade. The United States also provides Honduras with the majority of their arms supply. Furthermore, the majority of homicide and violence in Honduras is through the usage of an illegal, imported arm. Corrupt officials and officers also play a role in the illegal arms trafficking.

More Players:

Costa Rica

French Guiana

Guatemala

Belize



Past International Actions

Arms Trade Treaty

Before the treaty, there were no set rules for arms trade on an international level, so what the world currently considers illegal arms dealing would be considered legal because there would be no official regulation. The treaty sets international standards to guide governments and assists countries. It is meant to reduce armed conflict and violence, foster a better environment for peacekeeping, and allow there to be a more stable and safe environment for humanitarian actors around the world. Important elements of the treaty include scope, ammunition, prohibition on transfers, reporting, and international cooperation. Since the ATT has been put into place, there has been a 7% decrease in illegal international arms trade. The number is promising, but illegal arms trading still happens at high levels, and a more effective resolution is needed.



Key Terms

Black Market Transfers - illegal or unauthorized movement of arms outside of legal channels which generally bypass taxes and restrictions. This is illegal on a national, sometimes international level.

Grey Market Transfers- the sale of weapons through channels that are not explicitly illegal but exist in a legal “gray area”. Oftentimes, these items are sold outside of government-sanctioned channels without directly violating any laws (i.e. a loophole).

Embargo- ban on movement, transfer, or trade of arms to a particular country or area.

Laundering- the disguise of illegally obtained money as a legitimate pursuit.

Dealer/Broker- The person or organization involved in the buying/selling of arms.

End User- the recipient of transported arms (can be legal, like if given to the government or military for further advancement in technology).



Questions To Consider

1. Based on past precedents of the Arms Trade Treaty's effectiveness, how might policymakers move forward with new ways to a solution while also keeping in mind proven methods of deterrence?
2. In this committee, we have both small and large political entities. How does your country's location and political affiliation affect its involvement in the arms trade, and why is that significant?
3. In what ways can your country move towards ending the illegal arms trade on a national level while still protecting its reputation?
4. How can your country collaborate with other countries facing this same issue to combat it?



Recommended Resources

<https://nacla.org/article/small-arms-trade-latin-america>

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/understanding-arms-trafficking-in-colombia/>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1181482/civilian-gun-possession-latin-america-caribbean-country/>

<https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/behind-a-rise-in-latin-americas-violent-crime-a-deadly-flow-of-illegal-guns/>

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2021/April/south-american-crackdown-on-illegal-gun-trade-reveals-serious-trafficking-despite-pandemic.html>

<https://ocindex.net/country/>

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