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Mapping the small-arms trade

Mary Ann McGivern | Oct. 17, 2013 NCR Today

The Peace Research Institute Oslo and the Igarapé Institute have mapped the sale of small arms in 3-D [1]. The map is an astonishing fireworks of trade around the world: Lines emerge from one spot of the globe and land, as you slow down the spinning motion, in another hemisphere or right in the country next door.

The data covers 1992 through 2011. It used 37 different records of imports and exports among 260 states and territories.

Small arms, including ammunition, usually means weapons designed for one person to be able to carry and use, though it could include heavier weapons that might be carried by a team of three, like heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable antiaircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars. There's a list for consideration.

These weapons might be included in some countries' reports of light arms exports and imports while others hold strictly to what a single man can carry. Other countries, of course, don't record their trade in small arms at all.

A friend of mine is fond of saying we exert more control over the international shipment of bananas than weapons. It's true. The Arms Trade Treaty, approved by 154 nations, will become law when 50 nations have ratified it. It includes ships, submarines, fighter planes, tanks as well as small arms -- everything but nukes and their delivery systems. The treaty would begin to exert control.

But the small arms pose the greater destabilizing threat. These weapons are sold in the world's conflict zones. They often are used to commit human rights violations and atrocities. Women and children frequently are the victims of these abuses. Ongoing armed combat, fueled by unrestricted arms trafficking, destabilizes entire regions, disrupts all aspects of life, and creates large populations of refugees.

The map takes about five minutes to download and doesn't operate on Explorer. I had to keep telling my computer to let the download continue, even though the script seemed unresponsive. And for about a month now, I've been looking at this map a few minutes a day, contemplating, if you will, the brilliant flashes of light that indicated trade in small-scale destruction.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/01/2014 - 19:50*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/mapping-small-arms-trade

Links:
[1] http://balder.prio.no/armsglobe2/index.php