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Ammunition: the fuel of conflict

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Introduction

Hundreds of thousands of people are killed each year through the misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Small arms ammunition is the fuel that keeps many of the world's conflicts raging. While small arms do not themselves cause conflict, they make it much deadlier, and a shortage of bullets can reduce or even stop fighting altogether. In the Central African Republic, fighters have been known to throw away weapons because they cannot buy the right bullets for them.¹ Due to recent fighting in Somalia, the price of a single bullet has reached a record \$1.50.

Ammunition production is a global business. At least 76 states are known to industrially manufacture small arms ammunition, and the number is growing as more states acquire production equipment. Kenya and Turkey have both become producers in the last ten years. The annual global output of small arms military ammunition is now estimated at between 10 and 14 billion rounds – 33 million rounds a day.

In addition, vast stockpiles of ammunition are known to exist, particularly in Eastern Europe. Hundreds of millions of rounds have been supplied from these stockpiles to conflict zones, facilitated by a global network of arms traffickers and brokers. UN figures show that Ukraine and Belarus alone may have stocks of up to three million tonnes of surplus ammunition. While states have a right to acquire ammunition for legitimate self-defence and law enforcement according to international standards, irresponsible transfers of ammunition can have a massive impact on people and their communities.

Despite the vital role ammunition plays in fuelling conflict, international controls over its trade are inadequate, often substantially weaker than those applied to other categories of weapons. Figures show that export data exists for only 17 per cent of the 10 to 14 billion bullets manufactured every year, leaving up to 10 billion rounds for which no reliable data exists.

On 26 June, the UN Review Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons begins in New York. At this conference, governments must adopt a new global set of rules and standards for transfers of small arms and ammunition. In October 2006, at the UN General Assembly, governments should agree to negotiate a new international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to regulate transfers of all conventional arms, including ammunition.

What kind of ammunition is most commonly used in armed conflict?

Prominent calibres linked to armed conflicts include 5.56mm, 7.62mm, and 12.7mm ammunition for assault rifles and light and heavy machine guns, as well as 9mm ammunition for sub-machine guns and automatic pistols.² Two key calibres of ammunition commonly found in conflict zones around the globe are 7.62 x 39mm, which is used in the AK-47 and AK derivative assault rifles, and the 7.62 x 51mm NATO standard round, which is used in G3 and FN FAL weapons.

Who makes ammunition?

Production of ammunition for small arms and light weapons takes place in all regions of the world. At least 76 countries are known to industrially manufacture small arms ammunition for military, security, and police forces as well as for civilian markets.³ Annual global output of military specification small arms ammunition is estimated to be in the region of 10–14 billion rounds, or between 27 and 38 million rounds per day.⁴ It is possible that global production might exceed these numbers because not all ammunition-producing factories have been included in these figures and several producers have significantly increased their production in the last three years to meet increased demand from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. For example, the US government has recently sought to acquire stocks of 78 million rounds of Soviet-style ammunition to equip Afghanistan (see below also).⁵ Based on calculations by the Small Arms Survey, the annual value of military calibre small arms ammunition production can be estimated at roughly \$2–3 billion per year.⁶

A significant proportion of ammunition producers (39 per cent) are located in the Americas.⁷ One of the world's largest producers of military ammunition is the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant in the USA. In 2005, the plant achieved a record output of 1.3 billion rounds. To meet increased demand, production has been quadrupled in the last four years.⁸ Other producers in the region are located in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela.⁹

Thirty-six per cent of states producing small arms ammunition are located in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.¹⁰ They include Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and Turkey.¹¹

Important producers of ammunition also reside outside the EU and USA, demonstrating the global nature of ammunition production. Small arms producing states in Asia and the Pacific region include Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, and South Korea.¹² Known ammunition-producing countries in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa include Burkina Faso,

Cameroon, Egypt, Israel, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Tanzania, and Zimbabwe.¹³ Israel's main producer, Israel Military Industries, is capable of producing 1.25 million cartridges per day, or approximately 500 million bullets per year.¹⁴

Many developing countries established their ammunition production capacities in the 1960s and 70s through the import of production equipment from long-established suppliers in France, Germany, and China. Belgium and the USA¹⁵ also supply equipment, as do Iran, Pakistan, and India.¹⁶ Kenya imported production equipment from Belgium in the late 1990s to establish the Eldoret ammunition plant, which has an estimated annual output of 20 million rounds of small arms ammunition.¹⁷ Turkey signed a contract in 2000 for the establishment of a domestic production plant with suppliers from Germany, France, and Belgium,¹⁸ and subsequently established itself as an important ammunition exporter.

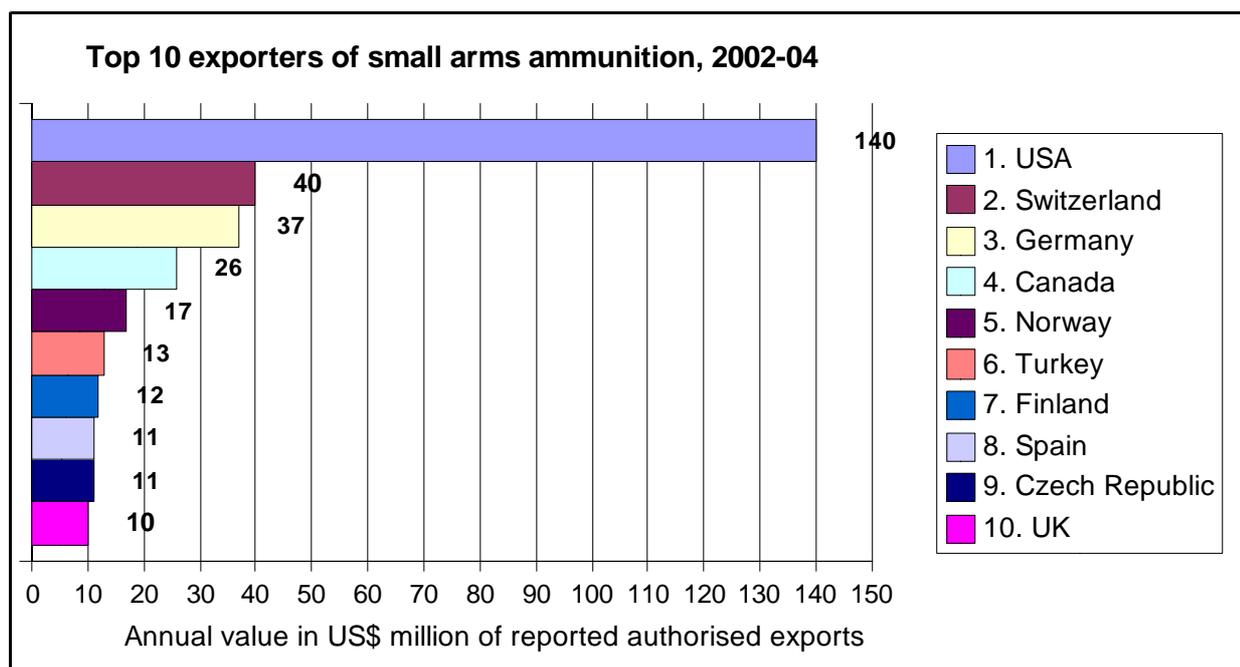
Who buys, who sells?

Data on exports of small arms ammunition is extremely limited and only allows for an incomplete picture of the global trade.¹⁹ Information has been provided by 107 states on their exports of small arms ammunition in at least one year during 2002–2004. In total, states reported exports of small arms ammunition in this period worth at least \$370 million a year. This excludes transfers of shotgun cartridges, grenades, and ammunition for light weapons and so the true value of authorised transfers of all types of SALW ammunition is much higher. These trade figures only represent about 17 per cent of the estimated global production capacity, which leaves no reliable, internationally available information on the usage or potential transfer of up to 110 billion rounds of ammunition produced each year, although it is assumed that a significant proportion will be produced for national military holdings.

Moreover, many significant producers of ammunition have not reported at all. For example, no data is available for 2002–2004 for exports of small arms ammunition other than shotgun cartridges by Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Iran, Romania, or Israel. Some of these states are known to have a very significant ammunition production capacity and some have exported small arms ammunition in the past, including to conflict zones in Africa and elsewhere. So the available export data is a very conservative estimate of the size of small arms ammunition transfers.

Nevertheless, the data that is available on the global trade in small arms ammunition, excluding shotgun cartridges, does indicate that the trade is dominated by the USA. In 2002–2004, the annual average for US authorised exports and imports amounted to \$140 million and \$93 million respectively (see Figure 1). Europe was the major destination for US exports at 33 per cent. Exports to the Middle East and Asia made up 26 and 24 per cent respectively. The Americas made up 17 per cent of US exports, and sub-Saharan Africa less than 0.5 per cent. Other large trade actors are Canada, Germany, South Korea, and Switzerland. The average of their reported authorised exports and/or imports in 2002–2004 ranged between \$20–40 million a year. Medium actors with reported exports and/or imports between \$2–19 million a year include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, and the UK. Most states are small exporters and importers in all regions of the world with reported authorised annual transfers worth \$1 million or less.

Figure 1



Source: NISAT database (values exclude the trade in shotgun cartridges)

Who trades with whom?

Most of the global ammunition trade takes place within the Western hemisphere or between Western states and allies in Asia and the Middle East. There has been increased competition in the ammunition trade since the 1990s due to the more active participation of states in Central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.²¹ While less significant in overall financial terms, there is also an active trade between industrialised and developing countries. For example, reported exports of small arms ammunition to sub-Saharan Africa in 2002–2004 amounted to only \$4 million a year, or about 1 per cent of global exports. At the same time, this trade involved more than 20 exporting states in Europe, North America, and South-East Asia, and 30 importing states. Prominent exporters included Spain, France, the USA, Italy, and China. Prominent importers included Ghana, South Africa, and the Republic of Congo (see Table 1). It should be noted that very significant recent supplies of ammunition to sub-Saharan Africa have not been reported, due largely to the illicit nature of the transfers or of the destinations involved, which include countries under UN or other multilateral arms embargo. From an analysis of several case study examples noted in UN Sanctions reports and elsewhere, it is known that hundreds of millions of rounds have been exported to fuel the conflicts in northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia, but these supplies are unreported by either the importing or exporting state²².

There is also an active trade between developing countries, with several states increasingly involved especially in regional ammunition markets. For example, the Philippines reported exports worth \$3 million a year in 2002–2004 to Australia, Bolivia, Cambodia, Chile, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Singapore, South Africa,

Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, USA, Venezuela, and Yemen. South Africa itself exported small arms ammunition worth \$128,000 a year in 2002–2004 to the Ivory Coast, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.²³ Zimbabwe also exported small arms ammunition during this period to Botswana, Malawi, and South Africa. Such trade flows within and between the developed and the developing world highlight the truly global nature of the current trade in small arms ammunition.

Table 1: Top 10 exporters to and importers in sub-Saharan Africa, 2002–2004

Annual average value in US\$ of reported authorised exports to sub-Saharan Africa – please note section above about non-reporting of ammunition supplied to key conflict zones in the region.

Top 10 Exporters			Top 10 Importers		
Position	Exporting state	Annual average	Position	Importing state	Annual average
1.	Spain	1,500,000	1.	Ghana	1,300,000
2.	France	840,000	2.	South Africa	910,000
3.	USA	550,000	3.	Congo (Republic of)	396,000
4.	Italy	430,000	4.	Uganda	300,000
5.	China	320,000	5.	Guinea	150,000
6.	Croatia	190,000	6.	Namibia	130,000
7.	Slovakia	150,000	7.	Burkina Faso	67,000
8.	Austria	115,000	8.	Guinea-Bissau	60,000
9.	Czech Republic	90,000	9.	Tanzania	37,000
10.	Switzerland	90,000	10.	Senegal	36,000

Source: NISAT database (values exclude the trade in shotgun cartridges)²⁴

What is held in military stockpiles?

Small arms ammunition may last up to 20 years and longer if adequately stored, although its ballistic performance is likely to decline as the propellant degrades.²⁵ Significant stockpiles of ammunition can build up if unused ammunition is not disposed of. Stockpiles may contain ammunition that is in excess of requirements by security forces. There is little information about the size of national stockpiles, because states are often reluctant to reveal information about their level of preparedness to sustain an armed conflict. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of surplus ammunition inherited from the Cold War are thought to be held in Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.²⁶ The relevant UN office in South Eastern Europe has estimated surplus stocks of ammunition from only ten countries in the region as follows:²⁷

Albania	140,000 tonnes
Belarus	1,000,000 tonnes
Bosnia-Herzegovina	32,000 tonnes
Bulgaria	153,000 tonnes
Croatia	40,000 tonnes
FRY Macedonia	10,000 tonnes
Moldova	20,000 tonnes
Romania	100,000 tonnes
Serbia and Montenegro	100,000 tonnes
Ukraine	2,000,000 tonnes
Total:	3,595,000 tonnes

Whist approximately 80 per cent of this surplus ammunition is likely to be larger calibre artillery shells and other ordnance, at a minimum this means that these ten countries alone have stockpiles of several hundred million rounds of small arms ammunition.

It is known that many of these countries have exported hundreds of millions of rounds of ammunition from these surplus stocks. For example, in the last two years, at least 23 million rounds have been supplied to Iraq from surplus stocks in Bosnia.²⁸ Records from Albania reveal that since 1993, nearly 124 million rounds of ammunition have been exported from Albanian stockpiles to countries such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the DRC, Indonesia, Rwanda, Sudan, and Turkey, as well as to private brokers and dealers located in the USA, UK, Israel, and the British Virgin Islands.²⁹ Typically, Albania sells its surplus ammunition for \$0.05 per round (based on 7.62mm cartridge). In at least one case, arms brokers have then sold this ammunition to war zones for approximately \$0.26 per round, a profit margin of some 550 per cent,³⁰ suggesting that surplus stocks can provide an extremely lucrative source of cheap ammunition for illicit arms trafficking and brokering networks. Surplus ammunition stocks also exist in other regions of the world and thousands of tonnes or more are already in illicit circulation and held by armed groups and other dangerous end users.

Box 1: The looting of stockpiles in Albania, 1997

Civil unrest in Albania in early 1997 was accompanied by widespread looting and ransacking of arms and ammunition depots of the military, allegedly with the active involvement in some cases of officers and soldiers guarding the depots. It was initially estimated that 1,200 military storehouses were destroyed, and 'around 652,000 weapons, 1.5 billion rounds of ammunition, 3.5 million hand grenades, 3,600 tons of explosive devices and 1 million mines' looted.³¹ Looting also took place from police storage. More than 1,300 people were killed in shootings and more than 1,400 were wounded during March and September 1997.³² Looted small arms and ammunition reportedly found their way into armed violence in neighbouring Kosovo and have fuelled international organised crime.

Where does illicit conflict ammunition come from?

Those who misuse ammunition can get hold of it through numerous sources (see Box 2 for one example). Such ammunition may originate in legal domestic markets. Another source can be irresponsible exports by states, which includes ineffective or inadequate controls over individuals or companies operating within states' jurisdictions, facilitating diversions of ammunition from the legal trade to sustain illicit ammunition flows (see Box 4).

Box 2: Leonid Minin

Notorious arms broker, Ukrainian Leonid Minin, has been named in various UN reports on supplying arms to Liberia and Sierra Leone.³³ Documents reveal that those supplies included several million rounds of ammunition from surplus stockpiles in the Ukraine. As documented by the UN Panel of Experts in March 1999, 68 tonnes of Ukrainian weapons were sent to Burkina Faso using false end-user certificates (EUCs), operated by a British company, Air Foyle, under a contract organised by a company registered in Gibraltar. The weapons were shipped on to Liberia in an aircraft owned by Minin, registered in the Cayman Islands and operated by a company registered in Monaco. The weapons were then moved on from Liberia to Sierra Leone. The 68 tonnes included over 1 million rounds of 7.62 calibre ammunition.³⁴ In August 2000, Minin was arrested in Italy, and in June 2001 charged with arms trafficking and the illegal possession of diamonds. He was found with contracts, faxes documenting arms deals, weapons catalogues, and forged EUCs. These documents included details of a further shipment of 113 tonnes of weapons using Ivory Coast EUCs, believed to be destined for Liberia. These documents specified nearly 13 million rounds of small arms ammunition.³⁵ Minin was later released on the grounds that the prosecution lacked jurisdiction on Minin's arms trafficking activities because the arms transfers did not pass through Italy.

Box 3: Baghdad's black market

Violent deaths are increasing dramatically in Baghdad. On 6 June, Iraq's health ministry confirmed that the number of bodies received by Baghdad's main mortuary has increased every month this year. It also confirmed that most of the 6,000 people whose bodies were received between January and May of 2006 died violently.³⁶ Kidnapping and assassination have become common in the Iraqi capital. On 5 June, gunmen kidnapped at least 50 people in one incident in Baghdad.³⁷

The NGO, Doctors for Iraq, reports that it has seen a massive increase in the number of patients with bullet wounds. It says the victims are usually men aged between 18 and 45 years old, and most are killed or injured by automatic weapons fired at close range. The Iraqi health ministry believes that 61 doctors have been assassinated since 2003.³⁸

This horrific death toll is fuelled by the easy availability of small arms and ammunition. When Saddam Hussein's regime was toppled in 2003, about 20 million weapons were estimated to be in Iraq. Millions more are believed to have entered the country since.³⁹ Until now, there has been little available information about the origins of the ammunition causing misery for ordinary people in Baghdad.

Research conducted for Oxfam by Doctors for Iraq in May 2006 into the origins of the ammunition available on the black market in Baghdad found ammunition for 9mm semi-automatic pistols and 7.62 x 39mm AK assault rifles that originated from factories located in China, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Russia and Serbia, as well as bullets produced in Iraq before the current conflict started.

The bullets surveyed were from two markets in Baghdad, one in Sadar City (north-east of Baghdad) and the other in Kamalia (south-east of Baghdad). Ammunition was also surveyed from five different locations in Baghdad from individuals carrying weapons who gave sample ammunition to researchers.

While some of the ammunition was manufactured over 20 years ago, many of the bullets were new and in good condition, with production dates dating from 1999 to 2004.⁴⁰ This suggests that newly imported ammunition is becoming widespread on the Baghdad black market. This contrasts markedly with the early days of the current conflict when, it is believed, ammunition was largely sourced from existing Iraqi stockpiles.⁴¹

Examples of new ammunition surveyed by researchers include:⁴²

- 1999 – 7.62 x 39mm round manufactured by Serbian company Prvi Partisan Plant, Uzice⁴³
- 2002 – 7.62 x 39mm round manufactured in Russia⁴⁴
- 2002 – 9 x 19mm round manufactured in Romania, factory unknown⁴⁵
- 2004 – 9 x 19mm round manufactured by Czech company Sellior and Bellot

Weak transfer controls and poor transparency mean it is impossible to verify exactly how these newly manufactured bullets made the journey from the manufacturer to Iraq. But there are two likely explanations: either they were smuggled into Iraq from neighbouring countries or they have leaked from the vast supplies imported by coalition forces to equip the new Iraqi security forces. Both are probable scenarios.

For example, millions of rounds of ammunition have been supplied from Serbia and Bosnia over the last two years in contracts organised on behalf of the US Department of State. One airline company said it has made over 60 flights of arms and ammunition to Iraq during this period.⁴⁶ It is possible therefore, that the bullet of Serbian origin found its way into the Iraqi black market via this route.

In either case, weak controls on the global ammunition trade and weak stockpile security mean that new, high-quality ammunition is on sale on the Baghdad black market, accessible to individuals and militia groups alike, exacerbating the insecurity across the country and contributing to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq.

The cost of AK 47 bullets (Soviet-type 7.62 x 39mm ammunition) surveyed by the researchers ranged from 250–600 Iraqi Dinar (ID), or \$0.15–0.45, depending on the manufacturer and the age of the bullet. Doctors for Iraq have observed that victims of armed violence in Baghdad are usually killed by between four and 12 bullets. This means that, on average, the price of taking away a human life in Iraq is now \$2.40.

The Small Arms Survey reports that one of the main reasons why guns and ammunition are so easily available in Iraq was the coalition forces' failure to secure Iraqi stockpiles in the early days of the conflict. The coalition forces' early disbanding of the Iraqi army has also made it more difficult to control weapons and ammunition availability in Iraq.⁴⁷

Over the last decade, a sample of UN Panel of Expert reports on embargoed destinations in Africa shows that companies and individuals based in the following countries have facilitated the supply of arms and ammunition to illicit end-users. The list includes countries of manufacture, export, import, transit, diversion, and company registration involved in these deals. This is by no means an exhaustive list but shows the global and international nature of trafficking networks:

Albania, Belgium, the British Virgin Islands, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Cayman Islands, Cyprus, Egypt, Gibraltar, Guinea, Israel, Liberia, Libya, Moldova, Nigeria, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Serbia, South Africa, the Ivory Coast, Togo, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, UK, Zimbabwe.⁴⁸

For example, a Serbian company delivered approximately 5 million rounds of ammunition to Liberia in mid-2002 in violation of a UN embargo.⁴⁹ This amount roughly equals the annual requirement for ammunition of 10,000 armed fighters.⁵⁰

An armed group may also receive ammunition through the covert support of a state, or elements of a state, sponsoring the group's activities for political or financial reasons. These sponsors can play an important role because their support may mean that armed groups can sustain their activities independently of the international trade in ammunition. Several states in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa have been accused in various UN Sanctions Panel reports of facilitating transfers of ammunition to armed groups in neighbouring states.

Another important source of conflict ammunition is illicit ammunition that is already in circulation. Ammunition may also be acquired through its capture from enemy combatants and through ambushes and attacks on military transports and depots of military, police, and security forces.

Box 4: Embargo violations and ammunition flows to Somalia

Somalia descended into civil war in 1991 and experienced the total collapse of the state institutions. This contributed to more than a decade of armed violence between various groups competing for power in a lawless environment. Many civilians were killed or wounded because they were caught up in armed clashes or because they were deliberately targeted. Following several initiatives to launch a peace process, a Transitional Federal Government was formed in 2004 with the hope of facilitating the return of security and the rule of law.

Armed clashes between clans, sub-clans, militias, and other armed groups continue in several regions. Political violence, including targeted assassinations and attacks on humanitarian workers, also persists.⁵¹ The trade in SALW and their ammunition fuels this armed violence – despite a UN embargo that was imposed in 1992.

Workings of the Somali black market

A UN Panel of Experts that was convened in 2003 to monitor and investigate violations of the UN embargo revealed 'a disturbing picture of a continuous influx of small quantities of weapons and ammunition that feed the local open arms markets and faction leaders' warehouses in Somalia'.⁵² Once the SALW and ammunition arrived at Somalia's borders, they were redistributed by local arms merchants to armed groups within Somalia. The arms and ammunition often originated or passed through neighbouring or nearby countries in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East⁵³. For example, there were almost daily transfers in small vessels trading between Yemen and Somalia in 2003. Together, these transfers amounted to tonnes of SALW and ammunition.⁵⁴ They reportedly continue to take place.⁵⁵ This shows that illicit trade flows need not include the shipment of large quantities of military equipment at a time, to have a highly destabilising effect on security.

Ammunition plays an important role in the Somalia arms market. This is because SALW are already widely available, and armed groups therefore 'require steady access to ammunition rather than arms'. The intensity of armed clashes appears only limited 'by a general reluctance to suffer casualties and by the cost of ammunition'.⁵⁶

In Somalia Soviet-type 7.62mm ammunition sells for between \$0.5–0.7. The price also depends on the particular calibre type. For example, in 2005, one round of Western-type 5.56mm ammunition for the US M-16 assault rifle cost between \$1–1.3 on the Mogadishu black market in Somalia. The price for Western-type 7.62mm ammunition for the German G3 assault rifle ranged between \$0.4–0.9 a round.⁵⁷ In May 2006, the price of ammunition reached a record \$1.50 per round, due to a recent upsurge in fighting.⁵⁸ Prices in Somalia are reported to surge for all ammunition categories when warlords stock up on ammunition in anticipation of major armed clashes, providing considerable profits to arms merchants.⁵⁹

Investigations into illicit ammunition flows can sometimes identify possible sources, trade routes, and individuals suspected of involvement in illicit transfers. Moreover, illicit ammunition is frequently recovered from the scenes of armed violence and in post-conflict collection programmes. Information marked on this ammunition could assist in identifying and combating illicit flows. However, it is rarely possible to systematically track illicit ammunition in sufficient detail to provide the evidence required for political sanctions or legal prosecutions. This is because there are no global standards that oblige states to adequately mark ammunition and to keep accurate records of their transfers.

In 2004, Control Arms reported on several ammunition cartridges that were recovered at the site of the massacre of more than 150 unarmed refugees in August 2004 at the Gatumba transit camp in Burundi. Markings on the cartridges allowed for the identification of their respective countries and years of production (Bulgaria, 1995; China, 1998; and Serbia, 1999). However, the cartridges bore no further markings that would have allowed for distinguishing the particular rounds from others that were manufactured by the producers in the same years. It was therefore not possible to link the cartridges to specific transfers, recipients, merchants, and transport agents to identify how they ended up being used in a clear violation of international law.⁶⁰ It is worth noting that some states, including Brazil, have regulations in place that do provide for marking and record-keeping that allows for the reliable identification of small arms ammunition produced for state actors (see below).⁶¹

Ammunition availability and civilian casualties

Ammunition supplies have an impact on the ability of combatants to engage in hostilities. A shortage of bullets can reduce or even stop fighting altogether, suggesting that controls on ammunition supplies can be even more critical than controls on the weapons themselves. For example, in the Central African Republic, fighters have been known to throw away weapons because they cannot buy the right bullets for them.⁶²

In Mali, during the 1990–96 rebellion, the scarcity of small arms ammunition forced combatants to place their assault rifles on single-shot mode. The result was fewer civilian deaths and injuries associated with more indiscriminate forms of shooting.⁶³

In Liberia, thousands of civilians were caught in the crossfire during three separate waves of attacks on the city of Monrovia in June–July 2003.⁶⁴ In late June 2003 forces ran out of ammunition, including mortar rounds, and were forced to retreat. But upon receiving fresh supplies in July, the offensive was renewed. Indiscriminate mortar fire on central Monrovia was especially intense, and although it was not the only cause of civilian suffering, it accounted for many of the casualties. The ready availability of new supplies of ammunition was directly connected to the ability to engage in hostilities and the consequent loss of civilian life.

What is being done at multilateral and national levels?

The 2001 the UN Programme of Action on SALW failed to express any concern about the illicit trafficking and misuse of SALW ammunition.⁶⁵ In December 2005 the UN introduced a politically binding instrument to enable states to identify and trace illicit SALW.⁶⁶ Despite wide support that this agreement should include ammunition and be

legally binding, a handful of states prevented agreement on these crucial issues – especially the USA, Egypt, and Iran, which opposed both a legally binding agreement and the inclusion of ammunition.⁶⁷

The legally binding 2001 UN Protocol against the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms and Ammunition stipulates that states adopt national legislation that makes the illicit trafficking in ammunition a criminal offence, and that they establish effective export, import, and transit systems for ammunition. However, the UN Protocol only applies to commercial transfers and explicitly excludes state-to-state transactions and transfers by states made for national security interests. Similar standards exist in legally binding agreements on the control of firearms and ammunition in the Americas (1997) and in Southern Africa (2001).⁶⁸ Ammunition is also included in the scope of the 1998 EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports (but this remains only politically binding).⁶⁹

Other global and regional instruments on SALW control largely fail to make explicit provisions for the control of ammunition. The only reference made to ammunition in the 2000 SALW Document of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe is the suggestion that states provide financial and technical support for the disposal and destruction of seized or collected ammunition in post-conflict situations.⁷⁰ The 2004 agreement by states in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa on the control of SALW expresses in its preamble the concern about illicit trafficking of ammunition. However, it does not stipulate any measures that states should take to combat it.

It is encouraging that some states are taking national measures to strengthen domestic controls. One example is Brazil, which adopted legislation in 2003 and 2004 requiring that every quantity of 10,000 rounds or less of small arms ammunition for military, police, and security forces be marked by the producer with a code that is unique to the particular order and end-user of the ammunition. In addition, producers are required to keep records that allow for the reliable identification of the particular force and depot receiving the ammunition.⁷¹ The new legislation was adopted due to high concern about frequent diversions and leakage from state stockpiles. It means that state authorities can track ammunition that was diverted or misused by a member of a unit of a military, police, or security force to the particular unit in the force. This can provide a powerful disincentive to the misuse of ammunition.

Ammunition controls remain inadequate in many states. This inadequacy includes weaknesses in controls and standards on ammunition production, possession, transfers, and stockpile security. Furthermore, differences between existing national controls create loopholes that are exploited by traffickers. Also, often there can be weak or no implementation of these controls. States in the developing world may lack the human and financial resources to establish an effective national system. Critically, many states seem to accord a low priority to ensuring effective national controls on ammunition and responsible transfer policies.

Recommendations

Current controls on SALW ammunition fail to limit the wide and easy availability of ammunition that is misused in armed conflict and other armed violence. There also remains a significant lack of accountability in the ammunition trade, and those responsible for diversions and misuse often act with impunity. States are consequently failing to fully utilise ammunition control as an integral part of their efforts to combat the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects. The following recommendations must therefore be taken up as a matter of urgency:

- The UN Review Conference on preventing and combating the illicit trade in SALW in New York in June/July 2006 must agree common guidelines for SALW transfer controls, to be implemented at a national level based on states' existing responsibilities under international law. In October 2006, at the UN General Assembly, governments must agree to negotiate a new legally binding international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), covering all conventional weapons. Both agreements must be based on fundamental principles of international law and prohibit the transfers of weapons and ammunition to end-users who are likely to use them for serious abuses of human rights, grave violations of international humanitarian law, crimes against humanity, genocide, or other serious abuses, as set out in the Global Principles proposed by the Control Arms Campaign (see Appendix).
- At the UN Review Conference states should explicitly affirm that the illicit trade in SALW ammunition is an integral part of the challenges posed by the illicit trade in SALW. States should promote further efforts in those areas where SALW ammunition may require specific attention. These should include the development of common minimum standards on SALW ammunition stockpiles security, encouraging the destruction of surplus stocks to prevent ammunition falling into the wrong hands, and the provision of donor funding and technical capacity where necessary to achieve this.
- Governments should ensure that ammunition is specifically included within the UN Marking and Tracing process at the earliest opportunity. This should include a ban on any transfer of inadequately marked ammunition. The marking should include lot numbers, manufacturer's code, year of manufacture, and the exact type of ammunition. Marking should be required for the packaging of the ammunition and, where possible, for the body of the ammunition such as the cartridge case. All manufacturers and suppliers must be required to keep accurate records of all ammunition that they transfer or may subsequently re-transfer from their territory. National export control systems, record keeping and reporting should be amended according to these minimum standards where necessary.
- The development of global and regional minimum standards on SALW ammunition controls must be complemented with strengthened national controls on production, transfers, holdings, and use of SALW. States must ensure high standards in stockpile management and security. Greater efforts by states in these areas are imperative to prevent dealers, traffickers, and brokers diverting the millions of tonnes of SALW ammunition already in stockpiles into the illicit trade, where they are likely to fuel conflict, undermine sustainable development, and contribute to countless human rights violations.

Appendix: Global principles for arms transfers

Compilation of global principles for arms transfers

The following Principles bring together states' existing obligations under international law and standards in respect of the international transfer of arms and are proposed by a diverse group of non-government organisations.⁷² The Principles reflect many international instruments of a different nature: universal treaties, regional treaties, declarations of the United Nations, multilateral or regional organisations, and regulations intended to be a model for national legislation, etc.

Some of the Principles reflect customary land treaty law, while others reflect developing law or best practices gaining wide acceptance. The compilation indicates to states the best general rules to adopt in order to establish effective control of international transfers of all conventional arms according to the rule of law and in recognition of states' right to legitimate self-defence and duty of law enforcement according to international standards.

Principle 1: Responsibilities of states

All international transfers of arms shall be authorised by all states with jurisdiction over any part of the transfer (including import, export, transit, transshipment, and brokering) and carried out in accordance with national laws and procedures that reflect, as a minimum, states' obligations under international law. Authorisation of each transfer shall be granted by designated state officials in writing only if the transfer in question first conforms to the Principles set out below in this instrument and shall not be granted if it is likely that the arms will be diverted from their intended legal recipient or re-exported contrary to the aims of these Principles.

Principle 2: Express limitations

States shall not authorise international transfers of arms that violate their expressed obligations under international law. These obligations include:

- A. Obligations under the Charter of the United Nations – including:
 - a. binding resolutions of the Security Council, such as those imposing arms embargoes;
 - b. the prohibition on the use or threat of force;
 - c. the prohibition on intervention in the internal affairs of another state.

- B. Any other treaty or decision by which that state is bound, including:
 - a. binding decisions, including embargoes, adopted by relevant international, multilateral, regional, and sub-regional organisations to which a state is party;
 - b. prohibitions on arms transfers that arise in particular treaties which a state is party to, such as the 1980 UN Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be

Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its Protocols, and the 1997 Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention.

- C. Universally accepted principles of international humanitarian law – including:
- a. the prohibition on the use of arms that are of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering;
 - b. the prohibition on weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between combatants and civilians.

Principle 3: Limitations based on use or likely use

States shall not authorise international transfers of arms where they will be used or are likely to be used for violations of international law, including:

- A. breaches of the UN Charter and customary law rules relating to the use of force;
- B. gross violations of international human rights law;
- C. serious violations of international humanitarian law;
- D. acts of genocide or crimes against humanity.

Principle 4: Factors to be taken into account

States shall take into account other factors, including the likely use of the arms, before authorising an arms transfer, including the recipient's record of compliance with commitments and transparency in the field of non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament. States should not authorise the transfer if it is likely to:

- A. be used for or to facilitate terrorist attacks;
- B. be used for or to facilitate the commission of violent or organised crime;
- C. adversely affect regional security or stability;
- D. adversely affect sustainable development;
- E. involve corrupt practices;
- F. contravene other international, regional, or sub-regional commitments or decisions made, or agreements on non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament to which the exporting, importing, or transit states are party.

Principle 5: Transparency

States shall submit comprehensive national annual reports on international arms transfers to an international registry, which shall publish a compiled, comprehensive, international annual report. Such reports should cover the international transfer of all conventional arms including small arms and light weapons.

Principle 6: Comprehensive controls

States shall establish common standards for specific mechanisms to control:

1. all import and export of arms;

2. arms brokering activities;
3. transfers of arms production capacity; and
4. the transit and trans-shipment of arms.

States shall establish operative provisions to monitor enforcement and review procedures to strengthen the full implementation of the Principles.

Notes

- ¹ See E. Berman (2005) 'Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Central African Republic', unpublished document referred to in Small Arms Survey, 2005 p. 9.
- ² Military small arms ammunition defined as covering pistols, submachine guns, rifles and assault weapons, and crew-serviced machine guns ranging from 5.5 x 15mm to 14.5 x 114mm calibre – see Forcast International Ordnance and Munitions Forecast 2005.
- ³ Small Arms Survey (2005) *Small Arms Survey 2005: Weapons at War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 13.
- ⁴ Small Arms Survey (2003) *Small Arms Survey 2003: Development Denied*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 13.
- ⁵ London Daily Telegraph (2006) 'US Sets Up £215m Deal For Afghan Arms – From Russia', May 22.
- ⁶ Based on estimates of 20 cents per round, see Small Arms Survey (2002) *Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the Human Cost*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.14.
- ⁷ Small Arms Survey (2005), *op.cit.*, p. 14.
- ⁸ Alliant Techsystems Inc. (2005) 'Small-Caliber Ammunition', www.atk.com/ProductsSolutions/conventionalammo_smallcaliber.asp.
- ⁹ R. Stohl (1998), *Deadly Rounds: Ammunition and Armed Conflict*. Research report 98.4. London and Washington DC: British American Security Information Council, p.29ff.
- ¹⁰ Small Arms Survey (2005), *op.cit.* The members of the Commonwealth of Independent States are Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine.
- ¹¹ See Stohl (1998), *op.cit.*
- ¹² See Stohl (1998), *op.cit.*
- ¹³ See Stohl (1998), *op.cit.*
- ¹⁴ See Israel Military Industries Ltd, www.imisammo.com/scamp.htm.
- ¹⁵ H. Anders (2005) 'Exports of production equipment for ammunition: practices in Germany, France, and Belgium', Note d'analyse de Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix et la Sécurité (GRIP), Brussels: GRIP, www.grip.org/bdg/g4577.html.
- ¹⁶ See Stohl (1998), *op.cit.*, p. 12.
- ¹⁷ See Stohl (1998), *op.cit.* p. 14.
- ¹⁸ Amnesty International (2004) *Undermining Global Security: the European Union's Arms Exports*, AI index: ACT 30/003/2004. London: Amnesty International, p. 34. [web.amnesty.org/library/pdf/ACT300032004ENGLISH/\\$File/ACT3000304.pdf](http://web.amnesty.org/library/pdf/ACT300032004ENGLISH/$File/ACT3000304.pdf).
- ¹⁹ All data in this and the next section of this report on the value of authorised transfers of small arms ammunition in 2002–2004 were calculated on the basis of available information contained in the public access database of the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT database). The data was retrieved on 26 March 2006. The analysis is limited to data on reported authorised exports or imports of ammunition for small arms (United Nations (UN) Comtrade category 930630) other than shotgun cartridges (UN Comtrade category 930621). The analysis excluded mirror-data and data on authorised transfers of hand grenades and light weapons ammunition. The NISAT database is at http://82.199.16.4/nisat1/PublicQuery_New.aspx.
- ²⁰ NISAT database, analysis of data available for PRIO arms classification '405- Ammunition – all categories'.

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- ²¹ See Stohl (1998), *op.cit.*, p. 12.
- ²² NISAT database, *op. cit.* Note that there are no reports of military calibre ammunition imports or exports to these destinations.
- ²³ NISAT database, *op. cit.* The data has been compiled on the basis of reported imports by the recipient countries of small arms ammunition from South Africa.
- ²⁴ The value of exports by France and China includes the transfer from France to the Ivory Coast in 2003 of small arms ammunition worth \$2.27 million and transfers from China to Namibia in 2002 (worth \$930,000) and to Zimbabwe in 2004 (worth \$42,000). These transfers were not reported as exported by France and China though they were reported as transferred by the importing countries (see NISAT database).
- ²⁵ O. Greene, S. Holt, and A. Wilkinson (2005) 'Ammunition stocks: promoting safe and secure storage and disposal', Biting the Bullet briefing no. 18, p. 13, London: Biting the Bullet, www.international-alert.org/pdfs/btb_brf_18.pdf.
- ²⁶ Greene *et al.* (2005), *ibid*, p. 13f.
- ²⁷ Information provided by SEESAC, The South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, May 2006.
- ²⁸ Amnesty International (2006) 'Dead on Time – arms transportation, brokering and the threat to human rights', London: Amnesty International, p. 105.
- ²⁹ P. Holtom, H. Smith, B. Mariani, S. Rynn, L. Attree, and J. Sokolová (2005) *Turning the Page: small arms and light weapons in Albania*. London: Saferworld. See also *Democratic Republic of Congo: arming the east*" Amnesty International Report, July 2005, p. 6, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR620062005?open&of=ENG-COD>
- ³⁰ Based on figures provided by the Albanian government and a comparison against invoices and shipping documentation for brokered arms deals involving Albanian bullets to Rwanda.
- ³¹ Holtom *et al.* (2005) *op.cit.*, p. 6.
- ³² Holtom *et al.* (2005) *ibid*. p. 7, footnote 39.
- ³³ www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/SierraLeone/sclet11952e.pdf
- ³⁴ Documents supplied by Transarms.
- ³⁵ UN Panel of Experts Report on Liberia, S/2002/1115, October 2002, paragraph 83 and annex VI.
- ³⁶ BBC website (2006), 'Violent Baghdad deaths top 6,000', 6 June 2006.
- ³⁷ Los Angeles Times (2006), 'No Escaping Iraq Violence', 6 June 2006.
- ³⁸ BBC Monitoring International Reports, 'Iraqi press highlights' 28 February 2006.
- ³⁹ BBC File on Four (2006), 'Iraq arms 'leaking to insurgents'', 23 May, 2006.
- ⁴⁰ Oxfam would like to thank experts at the National Firearms Centre for their identification and analysis of these cartridge cases.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*.
- ⁴² Photographs of ammunition markings supplied to Oxfam.
- ⁴³ Pristine condition of the cartridge cases indicates recent transfer.
- ⁴⁴ Manufacturer's code on the cartridge case indicates production from Vympel State Production Association, Khabarovsk Territory.
- ⁴⁵ Manufacturer's code, 324, on the cartridge case indicated Romanian manufacture.
- ⁴⁶ Amnesty International (2006), *op. cit.*, Chapter 8.
- ⁴⁷ See Small arms Survey, as quoted in: <http://hei.unige.ch/sas/PressCoverage2004ybk/Financial%20Times%201%20July%202004.pdf>

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- ⁴⁸ Control Arms (2006) 'UN arms embargoes: an overview of the last ten years', Control Arms briefing note, London: Control Arms, 16 March, www.controlarms.org/find_out_more/reports/UN-arms-embargoes-final-13306.pdf.
- ⁴⁹ See Letter to the UN Secretary General, report on the arms embargo on Liberia, 24 April 2003, S/2003/498.
- ⁵⁰ Control Arms (2006), *ibid.*, p. 3.
- ⁵¹ UN Security Council (2006) 'Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia', UN document S/2006/122. New York: United Nations, p. 5ff.
- ⁵² UN Security Council (2003) *ibid.* 'Report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1474', UN document S/2003/1035. New York: United Nations, p. 5.
- ⁵³ UN Security Council (2003) *ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ UN Security Council (2003) *ibid.*, p. 19.
- ⁵⁵ UN Security Council (2006) *op.cit.*, p. 5.
- ⁵⁶ UN Security Council (2003) *op.cit.*, p. 17.
- ⁵⁷ See SAACID Somalia (2006) *Year-on-year survey of small arms ammunition prices in Mogadishu*, Nairobi: SAACID Somalia, www.saacid.org/Weapon%20charts/ammunition%20data%20-%20year-on-year%20tracking%20chart%20-%20February%202006.htm.
- ⁵⁸ BBC News (2006), 'Key battle for Mogadishu resumes', Friday 12 May, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4764467.stm>
- ⁵⁹ UN Security Council (2003) *ibid.*, p. 21.
- ⁶⁰ See Control Arms (2004) *Tracking Lethal Tools: marking and tracing arms and ammunition*, London: Control Arms, December, box 1, p. 6.f., www.controlarms.org/documents/mtfinaljan05.pdf.
- ⁶¹ H. Anders (2005) 'Scope for International Minimum Standards on Tracing Illicit SALW Ammunition', Note d'analyse de GRIP, Brussels: GRIP, June, www.grip.org/bdg/g4575.html.
- ⁶² E. Berman (2005) *op.cit.*, p. 9.
- ⁶³ N. Florquin and E. G. Berman (2005): *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region*, Small Arms Survey.
- ⁶⁴ 'Weapons Sanctions, Military Supplies, and Human Suffering: Illegal Arms Flows to Liberia and the June–July 2003 Shelling of Monrovia', Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, November 3, 2003.
- ⁶⁵ United Nations (2001) *UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects* (UN PoA). UN document A/CONF.192/15. New York: United Nations, 21 July, <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/poa.html>.
- ⁶⁶ The text of the instrument is printed in the annex of UN General Assembly (2005) *Report of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit SALW*. UN document A/60/88. New York: UN, 27 June, <http://disarmament.un.org/cab/oewg/Report.pdf>.
- ⁶⁷ One reason for this opposition was that despite the existence of head stamp markings on each individual unit of ammunition that identifies the year point and year of manufacture, given the large numbers transferred, it was technically considered unfeasible to trace bullets from individual lot numbers.
- ⁶⁸ See Organization of American States (OAS) (1997) *Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials* (OAS Convention on Firearms), Washington DC: OAS, 14 November, www.oas.org/juridico/English/treaties/a-63.html; and Southern African Development Community (SADC) (2001) *Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in*

the SADC Region, Blantyre, Malawi: SADC, 14 August,
www.iss.co.za/AF/RegOrg/unity_to_union/pdfs/sadc/3Protocol_on_Firearms.pdf.

⁶⁹ European Union (EU) (1998) *European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports*, EU document 8675/2/98 REV 2, Brussels: EU, 5 June,
<http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/08675r2en8.pdf>.

⁷⁰ See Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2000) *OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons*, Vienna: OSCE, 24 November, section V, D.5,
www.osce.org/documents/fsc/2000/11/1873_en.pdf.

⁷¹ See H. Anders (2005) *op.cit.*

⁷² This group of non-government organisations includes: Africa Peace Forum, Amnesty International, Arias Foundation, Caritas International, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Non-Violence International, IANSA, Oxfam International, Project Ploughshares, Saferworld, Schweitzer Institute, Sou da Paz, Viva Rio, and WINAD. Advisors to SC are the Federation of American Scientists and the Lauterpacht Centre, Cambridge University. The group has agreed the Global Principles as a collective proposal.

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