

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADVANCING SMALL ARMS AND  
LIGHT WEAPONS EXPORT, IMPORT AND  
TRANSSHIPMENT CONTROLS IN CENTRAL AMERICA<sup>1</sup>**

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to take available information from a single source on the legal trade in SALW for the three years 2000, 2001 and 2002 to begin develop a picture of legal exports and imports of SALW to Central America in recent history. A great deal has been written and reported on related to SALW transfers to Central America during the Cold War and the region's civil wars. Additionally, there has been quite a range of investigative journalism in recent years covering the illicit trade of Central American SALW to the conflicts in Colombia and Chiapas, Mexico as well as their related acquisition by drug traffickers, organised criminal groups and the infamous youth gangs that have taken over large sections of urban Central America. It is also likely that terrorist groups have found weaponry in Central America at one time or another.

However, as SALW transfers have shifted to a large degree from the traditional government-to-government deals reflective of the Cold War to private transactions between SALW producers and brokers on the one end and commercial armouries and private security companies on the other much less attention has been paid to the nature and volume of the SALW trade in Central America. This does not mean that Central American governments no longer acquire weaponry nor that foreign governments no longer provide supplies, but this part of the market has become a much smaller portion of the whole.

In order to develop effective SALW export, import and transshipment control regimes at the international, regional and national levels it is useful to have an idea of what is entering legally and from where so as to identify leakages to the illicit market as well as contacts from governments and companies at the points of origin in order to correct problems as they occur. One weakness of that data presented here is that it reflects the value of SALW transfers and not the quantity of units involved.

This paper does not pass any judgment on the transfers themselves except to acknowledge that they are legally authorised transactions. Nor does the author claim this information to be the only 'truth' on the nature and volume of SALW transfers to and within Central America. There are surely other sources that are more specific and accurate and that over time when shared broadly can help piece together the puzzle of an issue that spans the spheres of government, business, military, police and civil society.

## **2. Central American SALW Exports**

With the exception of Guatemala there is no SALW production within Central America and for this reason exports are not a key source of income for governments or the private sector relative to other sources. In order to get an idea of the magnitude of legal SALW exports from Central Americans to their neighbours and beyond the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers' (NISAT) Database of Authorised Small Arms Transfers<sup>2</sup> was consulted. Figures for Central American SALW exports are much more ambiguous than those presented in the following section on imports.

The purpose here is not to claim a precise figure for Central American SALW exports, but rather to try and detect actual flows and (in)consistencies in reporting. For the most part, possibly with the exception of Guatemala, Central American SALW exports should be considered re-exports. At the same time, discrepancies may appear because authorisations and actual deliveries may or may not be differentiated.

### **2.1 Belize (Exports)**

While Costa Rica reports having imported SALW from Belize for the years 2000-2002, available data shows no record of exports from Belize to any country for that same time period. The database does indicate reported exports from Belize to Mexico and the US from the years 1992 to 1999. These exports were coded as re-exports.

### **2.2 Costa Rica (Exports)**

Between the years 1996 and 2000 Costa Rica did report a variety of low-value SALW exports to El Salvador, Nicaragua and the United States. One year an export of a rifle for the value of USD 1 was recorded to an unspecified country probably representing a symbolic transfer cost. Since Costa Rica has no reported SALW industry it has to be assumed that any exports were re-exports or sales of used merchandise. By analysing other Central American countries' import data for the period 2000-2002 there is evidence that Costa Rica exported a mere USD 2,092 in SALW to Guatemala and Panama.

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<sup>2</sup> For the NISAT Database of Authorised Small Arms Transfers see <<http://www.nisat.org>>. The database is funded by the Government of Norway and jointly managed by the Oslo Peace Research Institute, Norwegian Red Cross and Norwegian Church Aid. For more information, corrections, clarifications or interest in submitting data contact Nicolas Marsh <[nic@prio.no](mailto:nic@prio.no)>.

### **2.3 El Salvador (Exports)**

For the years 2000 to 2002 El Salvador reported almost USD 1.5 million in SALW exports, overwhelmingly to the US, but also including very small dollar amounts to Belgium, Guatemala and Nicaragua. These exports would have to be considered re-exports, or possibly merchandise returns, since El Salvador has no SALW industry with the exception of some production of bullet casings without gun powder.<sup>3</sup> By analysing other Central American countries' import data for the period 2000-2002 there is also evidence that El Salvador exported a mere USD 3,605 in SALW to Guatemala.

### **2.4 Guatemala (Exports)**

Guatemala reports to have exported USD 75,852 in SALW from 2000 to 2002 to Israel, Mexico, Nicaragua and the United States. The bulk of exports consisted of ammunition and pistols and revolvers. Guatemala is the only Central American country with a SALW industry. At one point the state-owned *Industrias Militares de Guatemala* (IMG), was reported to assemble Galil assault rifles under license from Israel. According to the most recent edition of *Jane's Infantry Weapons*, IMG continues to produce 5.56 mm ammunition and rifles/carbines, but this production appears to be primarily for consumption by military and police forces. By analysing other Central American countries' import data for the period 2000-2002 there is also evidence that Guatemala exported a mere USD 3,822 in SALW to Costa Rica.

### **2.5 Honduras (Exports)**

Between 2000 and 2002 Honduras reported exporting a small volume of SALW ammunition to the US. These exports would have to be assumed to be exports or merchandise returns since the country does not have a SALW industry.

### **2.6 Nicaragua (Exports)**

Between 2000 and 2002 Nicaragua only reported exporting USD 11,500 of military SALW. However, in 1999 Honduras reported exporting more than USD 1.3 million in SALW, primarily ammunition

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<sup>3</sup> Information that El Salvador has a small industry producing bullet casings was obtained via interviews with officials from the Ministry of National Defence's Logistics Division, San Salvador, June 2003.

and military SALW, to Bulgaria, Guatemala and Russia. Other Nicaraguan SALW export destinations dating back to 1994 include Ecuador and the United States. These exports would have to be assumed to be exports or merchandise returns since the country does not have a SALW industry.

## 2.7 Panama (Exports)

While El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala report having imported SALW from Panama between 2000 and 2002 there is no Panamanian SALW export data found in the database consulted after 1998. Analysing import data from other Central American countries there is evidence that Panama exported USD 140,987 worth of SALW to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras for the period 2000 – 2002.

## 3. Central American SALW Imports

For information on Central American SALW imports the NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers was also consulted. The data was analysed regionally and nationally by type of SALW import and country of origin. Data obtained by category of SALW import and country of origin do not square, possibly because of the problem mentioned above of differentiation, or lack thereof, between authorisations and deliveries. To avoid confusion total figures and percentages were only applied to Central American SALW imports by type of weapon. Data for country of origin does not place percentages of imports by a particular country, but does seek to rank them.

### 3.1 Total SALW Imports

For the years 2000 to 2002 the Central American countries imported approximately USD 26.2 million worth of SALW, ammunition, explosives and related materials, about USD 8.6 million annually on average. Honduras represented the single largest importer in the region, though these figures appear to reflect a one-time military acquisition.

**Table 3.1**  
**Central American SALW Imports**  
**All Categories (2000 – 2002)**

Country	USD Value
Belize	551,034
Costa Rica	3,564,486
El Salvador	7,197,636

Guatemala	11,811,828
Honduras	14,385,103
Nicaragua	3,394,147
Panama	1,751,906
Total	26,261,993

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.2 Military SALW Imports

Military SALW imports represented approximately 32 per cent of all SALW imports with Honduras and El Salvador being the most significant importers of this category of weapon. Honduran figures, as mentioned above, appear to demonstrate a one-time acquisition for military arsenals. However, it should be noted that in some Central American countries military SALW, or variations thereof, can be legally held by police, private security firms and civilians.

**Table 3.2**  
**Central American Military SALW Imports (2000 – 2002)**

Country	USD Value
Belize	0
Costa Rica	1,646
El Salvador	1,156,517
Guatemala	480,629
Honduras	6,982,227
Nicaragua	77,828
Panama	139,896
Total	8,406,183

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.3 Rifle and Shotgun Imports

Rifle and shotguns imports, categorised as for sporting use, represented 45 per cent of all Central American SALW imports with Guatemala and Nicaragua being the two largest importers. The lack of a substantial Central American leisure class means that it is unlikely that the majority of these weapons are used for hunting or other sporting goods and instead are employed by private security firms and possibly farmers and cattle ranchers.

**Table 3.3**  
**Central American Rifle and Shotgun Imports (2000 – 2002)**

Country	USD Value
Belize	59,594
Costa Rica	253,175

El Salvador	502,285
Guatemala	1,029,707
Honduras	631,127
Nicaragua	824,084
Panama	112,052
Total	11,818,207

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.4 Pistol and Revolver Imports

Pistols and revolvers represent 68 per cent of the value of all Central American SALW imports with Guatemala and Honduras being the two largest importers of these categories of weapons.

**Table 3.4**  
**Central American Pistol and Revolver Imports (2000 – 2002)**

Country	USD Value
Belize	339,951
Costa Rica	2,002,968
El Salvador	3,167,617
Guatemala	5,810,033
Honduras	4,476,482
Nicaragua	1,466,942
Panama	639,350
Total	17,903,346

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.5 Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles Imports

Ammunition, explosives and missiles represent approximately 25 per cent of the total value of Central American SALW imports with Guatemala and Honduras being the two largest importers. While this category may include grenade and rocket launchers it is overwhelmingly dominated by SALW ammunition.

**Table 3.5**  
**Central American Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles Imports (2000 – 2002)**

Country	USD Value
Belize	147,963
Costa Rica	986,381
El Salvador	1,694,554
Guatemala	2,974,140
Honduras	2,295,267

Nicaragua	632,738
Panama	811,879
Total	6,866,192

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.6 SALW Parts and Accessories Imports

SALW parts and accessories imports represented just under 9 per cent of all Central American SALW imports. Guatemala was by far the most important importer of SALW parts and accessories which is probably indicative of their use as inputs in the national SALW industry.

**Table 3.6**  
**Central American SALW Parts and Accessories Imports**  
**(2000 – 2002)**

Country	USD Value
Belize	3,526
Costa Rica	160,158
El Salvador	174,378
Guatemala	1,517,319
Honduras	118,622
Nicaragua	392,555
Panama	48,729
Total	2,375,287

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.7 SALW Imports by Origin

The US and Italy were the two largest exporters of SALW to Central America for the period 2000 to 2002 with more than USD 13 million and USD 11 million respectively. Table 3.7 lists the top ten countries of origin for Central American SALW imports. All of the top ten imports originated in either Europe or the Western Hemisphere, with the exception of South Africa for which only Guatemala reported importing weapons. Central American countries only imported USD 150,000 in SALW from other Central American countries. Brazil, Mexico and Argentina were the top three exporters of SALW to Central America from Latin America in that order.

Aggregated in regional blocs the European Union (including new members) and OAS Member States share the Central American SALW market equally with USD 17.1 million and USD 17.8 million in imports respectively. Russia and other non-EU former Soviet Bloc countries account for less than USD 500,000 in imports. Approximately USD 1

million is imported to Central American from Asia of which imports from the Philippines constitute the vast majority. The only African imports come from South Africa.

**Table 3.7**  
**Top Ten Central American SALW Imports by Origin**  
**(2000 – 2002)**

Country	Rank	USD Value
Austria	10	820,470
Belgium	6	1,149,121
Brazil	5	1,856,476
Czech Republic	4	2,049,345
Hungary	8	924,076
Israel	3	3,609,441
Italy	2	11,198,588
Mexico	7	1,118,068
South Africa	9	869,390
United States	1	13,368,757

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.8 Belize (Imports)

For the three years covered Belize imported a little more than half a million dollars in SALW. More than half of Belize's SALW imports come from the US followed by the UK and Brazil and Uruguay in a distant third and fourth respectively. Most of the imports from the UK consisted of ammunition and explosives. It should be noted that in 2001 Belize reported less than USD 600 in SALW imports.

**Table 3.8a**  
**Belize - SALW Imports by Type (2000-2002)**

Category	Value in US Dollars
Rifles and Shotguns (sport)	59,594
Pistols and Revolvers	339,951
Parts and Accessories	3,526
Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles	147,963
Total	551,034

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

**Table 3.8b**  
**Belize- SALW Imports by Country of Origin (2000-2002)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Value in US Dollars</b>
Brazil	10,103
France	1,248
Israel	2,158
United Kingdom	96,992
United States	295,081
Uruguay	14,146
Other	296,335

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### **3.9 Costa Rica (Imports)**

Almost half of all Costa Rican SALW imports came from the US followed by Mexico, Argentina, Czech Republic, Italy, Spain and Austria. In the case of Mexico the imports were entirely ammunition. Costa Rica did import relatively small quantities of weapons from within the region, Guatemala (sporting rifles) and Belize (pistols and revolvers).

**Table 3.9a**  
**Costa Rica - SALW Imports by Type (2000-2002)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Value in US Dollars</b>
Rifles and Shotguns (sport)	253,175
Pistols and Revolvers	2,002,968
Military SALW	1,646
Parts and Accessories	160,158
Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles	986,381
Total	3,564,486

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

**Table 3.9b**  
**Costa Rica - SALW Imports by Country of Origin (2000-2002)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Value in US Dollars</b>
Argentina	142,214
Austria	73,186
Belgium	5,624
Belize	1,827
Brazil	27,161
Canada	725
Chile	3,500
China	1,663
Czech Republic	118,524
France	30,265

Germany	12,270
Guatemala	3,822
Israel	11,022
Italy	89,725
Mexico	193,849
Spain	80,348
United Kingdom	6,319
United States	1,655,121
Other	4,630

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.10 El Salvador (Imports)

El Salvador imported slightly less than half of all of its SALW from the US followed by Belgium, Brazil and Italy. Imports from Belgium consisted primarily of military SALW, probably FN-FAL rifles for use by the army. Notably, more than USD 200,000 in SALW were imported from the Philippines and slightly more than USD 100,000 from Panama. Imports from Panama consisted of pistols, revolvers and ammunition.

**Table 3.10a**  
**El Salvador - SALW Imports by Type (2000-2002)**

Category	Value in US Dollars
Rifles and Shotguns (sport)	502,285
Pistols and Revolvers	3,167,617
Military SALW	1,156,517
Parts and Accessories	174,378
Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles	1,694,554
Total	7,197,636

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

**Table 3.10b**  
**El Salvador - SALW Imports by Country of Origin (2000-2002)**

Country	Value in US Dollars
Argentina	50,419
Austria	53,058
Belgium	1,115,037
Brazil	836,130
Czech Republic	51,498
France	15,495
Germany	45,992
Hungary	9,735
Italy	705,632
Mexico	1,262
Panama	123,546

Philippines	236,779
South Korea	52,773
Spain	81,266
Switzerland	44,262
United Kingdom	59,480
United States	3,194,026
Venezuela	50,758
Other	7,240

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.11 Guatemala (Imports)

Guatemala has provided the most comprehensive data to the NISAT database of any Central American countries including both SALW models, import quantities and values. The US was only the third largest exporter of SALW to Guatemala preceded by Italy and Israel in value of SALW sales. Other significant volumes of SALW imports to Guatemala came from Czech Republic and South Africa. Relatively large volumes of parts and accessories imports is probably indicative of inputs to Guatemala's own SALW industry. Substantial volumes of rifles and shotguns classified as sporting weapons are likely used by private security firms and farmers and ranchers.

**Table 3.11a**  
**Guatemala - SALW Imports by Type (2000-2002)**

Category	Value in US Dollars
Rifles and Shotguns (sport)	1,029,707
Pistols and Revolvers	5,810,033
Military SALW	480,629
Parts and Accessories	1,517,319
Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles	2,974,140
Total	11,811,828

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

**Table 3.11b**  
**Guatemala - SALW Imports by Country of Origin (2000-2002)**

Country	Value in US Dollars
Argentina	174,384
Australia	611
Austria	633,257
Belgium	110
Brazil	315,410
Bulgaria	16,518
Canada	9,261
China	68,131

Costa Rica	1,459
Cuba	16,968
Czech Republic	1,575,356
El Salvador	3,605
France	64,711
Germany	122,888
Hungary	315,504
Israel	2,967,651
Italy	4,025,968
Mexico	441,562
North Korea	114,948
Panama	7,761
Philippines	476,064
Russia	103,790
South Africa	869,390
South Korea	134,922
Spain	196,051
Taiwan	2,575
United Kingdom	38,639
United States	2,700,519
Uruguay	126,662
Other	2,611

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.12 Honduras (Imports)

For the three years covered Honduran imports came overwhelmingly from the United States and Italy. Overall Honduran imports figures for the years 2000 to 2002 appear exaggerated by a one-time purchase of more than USD 6 million in military SALW from Italy, probably for updating the military arsenal. Taking this transaction out of the figures would give the US a near monopoly on SALW sales to Honduras with some other relatively important imports from Mexico and the Czech Republic.

**Table 3.12a**  
**Honduras - SALW Imports by Type (2000-2002)**

Category	Value in US Dollars
Rifles and Shotguns (sport)	631,127
Pistols and Revolvers	4,476,482
Military SALW	6,982,227
Parts and Accessories	118,622
Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles	2,295,267
Total	14,385,103

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

**Table 3.12b**  
**Honduras - SALW Imports by Country of Origin (2000-2002)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Value in US Dollars</b>
Argentina	74,300
Czech Republic	143,520
El Salvador	700
Germany	2,528
Israel	14,204
Italy	6,335,907
Mexico	138,249
Panama	9,680
Spain	2,486
United States	6,555,260
Uruguay	21,574
Other	727

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### **3.13 Nicaragua (Imports)**

Nicaragua imported approximately one-third of its SALW from the United States followed by Israel, Brazil, Canada and Mexico. Imports from Mexico were almost entirely for SALW ammunition.

**Table 3.13a**  
**Nicaragua - SALW Imports by Type (2000-2002)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Value in US Dollars</b>
Rifles and Shotguns (sport)	824,084
Pistols and Revolvers	1,466,942
Military SALW	77,828
Parts and Accessories	392,555
Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles	632,738
Total	3,394,147

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

**Table 3.13b**  
**Nicaragua - SALW Imports by Country of Origin (2000-2002)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Value in US Dollars</b>
Argentina	45,870
Austria	60,969
Brazil	606,143
Canada	451,683
Chile	16,365
Czech Republic	160,447
Israel	614,406
Italy	36,972
Mexico	343,146

Russia	192,814
Spain	68,463
United States	1,149,296
Uruguay	75,341
Other	2,552

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

### 3.14 Panama (Imports)

Panama imported the largest volume of its SALW in terms of value from the United States with Hungary in a close second and Russia in a distant third. It is conceivable that many SALW pass through Panama's free trade zone en route to third countries, but are never recorded because they have not technically entered the country.

**Table 3.14a**  
**Panama - SALW Imports by Type (2000-2002)**

Category	Value in US Dollars
Rifles and Shotguns (sport)	112,052
Pistols and Revolvers	639,350
Military SALW	139,896
Parts and Accessories	48,729
Ammunition, Explosives and Missiles	811,879
Total	1,751,906

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

**Table 3.14b**  
**Panama - SALW Imports by Country of Origin (2000-2002)**

Country	Value in US Dollars
Argentina	52,281
Australia	652
Belgium	28,350
Brazil	61,529
Canada	20,123
Chile	34,637
Costa Rica	633
France	6,320
Germany	15,217
Hungary	598,837
Italy	4,384
Philippines	10,543
Russia	151,399
Spain	2,673
United States	694,074
Other	2,475

Source: NISAT Database on Authorised Small Arms Transfers

## **4. Conclusions, Recommendations and Other Considerations**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

4.1a The data provided above indicates that majority of legal SALW transfers to Central America in recent years were pistols and revolvers coming from companies, and to a lesser degree governments, in the OAS and EU Member States. Rifles and shotguns, classified as for sporting use, were the second most prominent category of weapon though their use in sporting activities is highly questionable.

4.1b Military SALW continue to enter Central America though the data suggests that some of these transfers may indeed be one-time transfers for the modernisation of military and/or police arsenals though in some countries may even be destined for private security or civilian use.

4.1c It is much less clear how legal SALW exports, re-exports or transfers are recorded and reflected by the Central American countries themselves and this may be because their relative infrequency and small-scale has not drawn significant attention to the issue.

4.1d With the exception of South Africa legal transfers from the African continent to Central American appear non-existent. Asia represents a proportionally small volume of SALW imports though Asian countries participation in the market appears to be slowly growing, most notably from the Philippines. Year 2003 customs data for Guatemalan SALW imports, not covered in the analysis above, also shows the introduction of new SALW in small quantities from Iran, Slovakia and Turkey.

4.1e Brazil and Argentina are the primary Latin American sources of Central American imports of pistols and revolvers while Mexico is an important supplier of ammunition.

### **4.2 Recommendations**

4.2a Since most of Central America's new SALW come from the EU and OAS regions the Central American governments should encourage a dialogue between the OAS and EU as to how to further build international consensus on export/import controls; marking and tracing and brokering controls with an eye to the 2005 Biennial Meeting of States and the 2006 Review Conference on the UN

## Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

This kind of dialogue has been initiated to a certain degree at the parliamentary level by the NGO Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation<sup>4</sup> by bringing together parliamentarians from Central America and Europe (primarily Finland, Spain and Sweden) to discuss issues related to SALW, primarily the harmonisation of Central American laws, but a greater degree of direct engagement between a broad set of EU and OAS Member State government officials is needed.

4.2b If the UN small arms process in 2005 and 2006 does not find a workable consensus on the identified SALW issues the EU and OAS should seek to develop a co-operative regime or agreement between the two regions, and other like-minded regional groupings. In the case of Central America such an agreement would be able to provide levels of control and transparency over more than 90 per cent of the SALW transfers to the region. The only current top ten SALW exporters Central America that would not be covered under such an arrangement would be Israel and South Africa.

4.2c Related directly to the above, both the EU and OAS need to promote greater ratification and implementation among their own members and beyond of the 'Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime'.<sup>5</sup> Since most SALW transfers to Central America are private, commercial transfers covered by the Protocol greater participation in that regime could further benefit regional small arms control when implemented complementarily with existing EU and OAS instruments. Of the top SALW exporters to Central America from outside the EU and OAS regions only South Africa has ratified the protocol.

4.2d Plans and proposals to increase transparency and information sharing at the level of the Central American Security Commission/Central American Integration System should take advantage of SALW transfer database systems currently being developed jointly by the OAS' Inter-American Drug Abuse Control

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<sup>4</sup> See < [http://www.swefor.org/human\\_security.asp](http://www.swefor.org/human_security.asp)>.

<sup>5</sup> As of September 2004 the only EU and OAS Member States to ratify the UN Firearms Protocol were: Costa Rica, Cyprus, El Salvador, Estonia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Latvia, Mexico, Norway, Panama, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Commission (CICAD) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC).<sup>6</sup> Central American governments should see how this system can be used to support or complement their own multilateral reporting so as to avoid duplication of effort and resources.

4.2e At the national level Central American governments and their relevant agencies should work with capable NGOs and academic centres to build grounded analysis comparing SALW export/import data from multiple sources with information on newly registered weapons, confiscated weapons and media reports on SALW trafficking and crime. The information produced and multi-sectoral relationships built through constructive engagement can contribute to the better understanding of SALW problems and greater possibilities for appropriately targeted interventions. Successful examples of co-operative government/civil society engagements using evidenced-based policy strategies can be found in El Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to name two examples.<sup>7</sup>

4.2f Since most SALW exports from Central America are re-exported products each country needs to adopt a coherent policy on re-exportation, if it has not already, that either requires prior notification to the original exporter or prohibits the practice altogether. In El Salvador in 2002 the parliament decided that its commitments under the Inter-American Convention obliged it to adopt a law that notified the original exporter of plans to re-export SALW. Perhaps other Central American governments can look to this interpretation to strengthen their SALW transfer policies and laws.

### **4.3 Final Considerations**

At present Central America is challenged with meeting the requirements of a multitude of agreements and instruments to deal with international proliferation and misuse of SALW at the level of SICA, the OAS and the UN not to mention the many overlapping and related commitments on security, drug trafficking, organised crime and terrorism. This can be potentially overwhelming for bureaucracies with limited resources and personnel. Hopefully, the commitment made by all of the Central American governments in Managua in February 2004 to establish functioning inter-agency small arms control

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<sup>6</sup> The joint OAS/UN Small Arms and Light Weapons Administration System (SALSA) can be found on the internet at < <http://www.salsa-system.org/PressCentre/EnPressCentre.aspx?SYS=18>>.

<sup>7</sup> See <<http://violenciaelsalvador.org.sv>> and <<http://www.vivario.org.br>>.

commissions, to include civil society organizations, will be met soon so that the labour may be shared appropriately.

However, no legislative changes can be made without parliaments and their specialised committees taking reform proposals forward. In Central America almost every country has reformed their national laws governing SALW at least once in the past five years. The political will to re-visit SALW control laws may be difficult to forge in an environment where the citizenry is living high levels of real and perceived public insecurity and where many see SALW possession as a necessary response in the absence of effective police action. The timing of national presidential and legislative elections also needs to be taken into consideration for the development of collective action.

Finally, in Central America, the issue of SALW imports/exports gets little attention in comparison to national debates on civilian possession, registration and the right to carry weapons in public. With an eye toward changing laws, policies and international co-operation each country its government and civil society institutions need to discern whether it is going to be more practical and/or effective to deal with international SALW transfer controls in isolation or as part of a broader national policy that looks both within and without.

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## **Acronyms**

-Central American Integration System	SICA
-European Union	EU
- <i>Industrias Militares de Guatemala</i>	IMG
-Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission	CICAD
-Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers	NISAT
-Organisation of American States	OAS
-Small Arms Light Weapons Administration System	SALSA
-Small Arms and Light Weapons	SALW
-Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation	SWEFOR
-United Nations	UN
-UN Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean	UN-LiREC
-United States Dollar	USD