

# An Epidemic of Guns

The world is being flooded by small arms, many of them left over from past wars. But as wars end, the deadly work of guns isn't going away. Killing more people than all the tanks, missiles, bombs, and fighter planes on Earth, these easy-to-buy, easy-to-hide weapons are proliferating in civilian societies.

by Michael Renner

In the years before its fall from power in 1994, South Africa's ruling regime stirred up rebel insurrections in neighboring countries from Mozambique to Angola, supplying a flood of small arms to these countries to stifle regional opposition to apartheid. The onset of South Africa's democratically elected government put an end to these regional campaigns of destabilization. And since that time, President Nelson Mandela has remade his nation—once a global outcast—into an international beacon of hope.

And yet, despite the country's transformation, South Africa has not reaped peace. In the 1990s the country has experienced a nearly seamless transition from politically motivated violence to criminal violence. Political conflict in the waning years of apartheid in 1990 to 1993 claimed some 10,000 lives. But as this kind of violence ground to a halt, criminal violence swelled to replace it. For example, recent clashes between competing taxi owners have escalated into "taxi wars," in which some company owners have employed hit men to kill the passengers and drivers of their rivals. Firearms, including military weapons such as the AK-47 and G-3 assault rifles, are increasingly used in robberies and other crimes. The number of homicides committed with guns reached about 11,000 last year—the highest rate in the world of any country not at war, equal to 26 slayings per 100,000 inhabitants.

This wave of criminal violence is fueled by high unemployment, severe social and economic inequalities, and endemic poverty. And underpinning these problems is a culture of violence that has emerged from decades of brutal political struggle between the apartheid regime's death squads and fierce anti-apartheid operations.

The escalation of violence today has been made possible by the massive availability of deadly weapons dispersed during the past political turmoil. In a population of 45 million, there may be as many as 17 million firearms of military and civilian caliber: government security forces have access to about 5 million firearms, private citizens legally hold another 4 million, and illegal ownership is estimated to be between 5 and 8 million. South Africa is so flooded with small arms, writes Jacklyn Cock of the University of Witwatersrand, that "light weapons have become a form of currency." A portion of the assault rifles and other firearms used in the civil wars in neighboring countries—some of them supplied by the old apartheid regime—are now resurfacing in South Africa, hitting the country like a boomerang that was tossed and forgotten.

"The level of violent crime linked to this proliferation [of arms] threatens the consolidation of democracy" in post-apartheid South Africa, says

Cock. And South Africa's dilemma is being replayed all throughout the world today. As wars come to a stop, the destructive force of firearms doesn't simply disappear, but in many cases actually proliferates. Small arms are moving beyond the military arena and are infecting countries and communities with rising levels of violence. And South Africa's continuing convulsion is only one example of the violence that takes place where unresolved societal problems mix with the massive proliferation of so-called "small arms and light weapons."

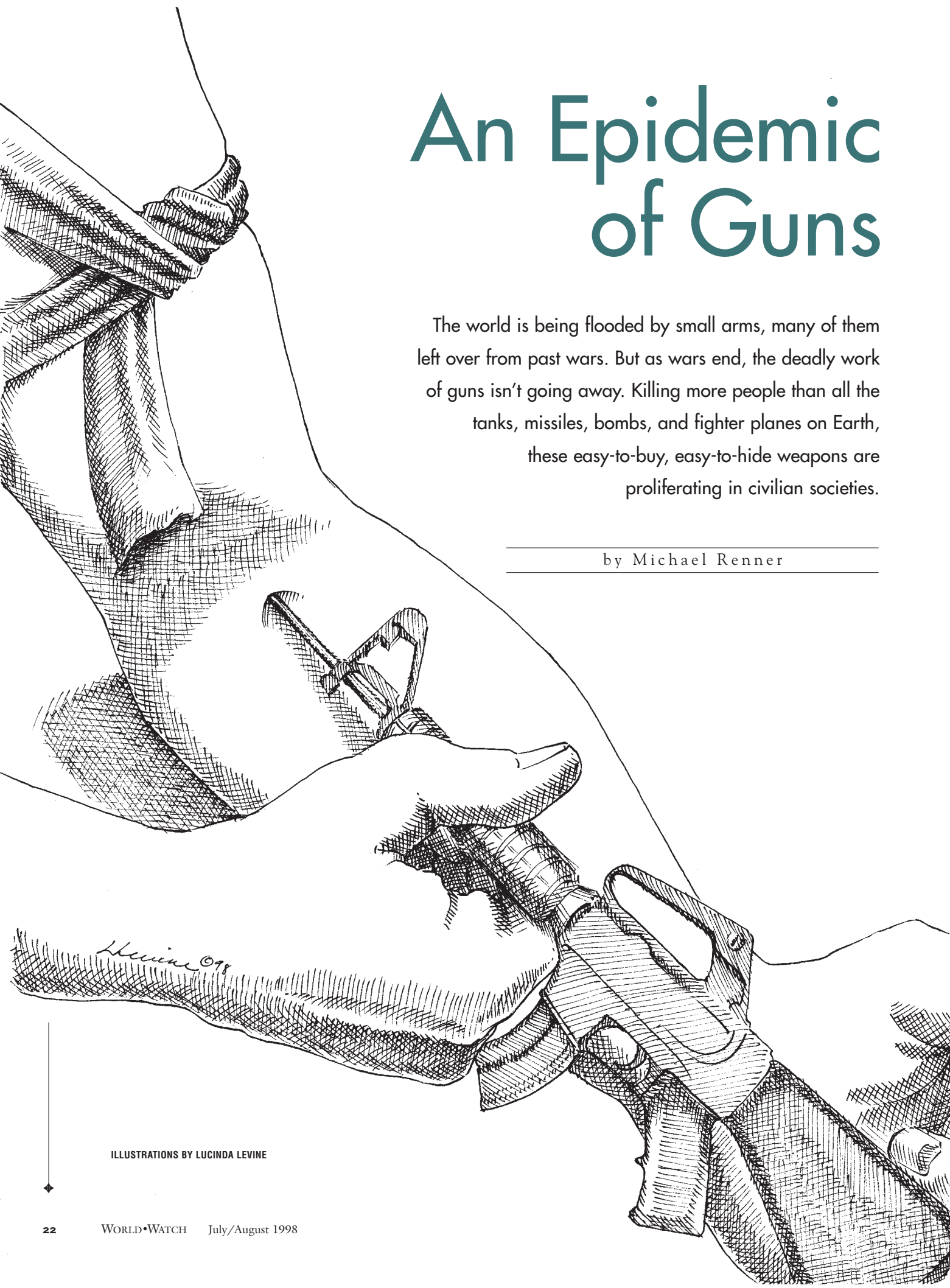
## NEITHER WAR NOR PEACE

The term "warfare" still evokes images of tank armies massed against each other, as in World War II, or jet fighters launching "smart" missiles, as in the Persian Gulf War. But the vast majority of armed clashes are not battles between sophisticated armies from opposing countries. Instead, most wars nowadays take place within countries where there are no delineated battlefields, the weapons are usually low-tech small arms, and there is little, if any, distinction between combatants and civilians.

The growing number and accessibility of small arms has changed the face of war today. A total of 101 conflicts raged between 1989 and 1996, reports the Uppsala Conflict Data Project in Sweden. Of these, 95 were internal. That count includes only conflicts involving government forces at least on one side. If the definition of armed conflicts is broadened to reflect today's circumstances, the numbers are much higher: the PIOOM Foundation in The Netherlands estimates the number of "low-intensity" conflicts in recent years has increased sharply, from 106 in 1993 to 161 in 1997. Small arms are clearly the weapons of choice in today's wars; they are responsible for as many as 90 percent of the deaths in conflicts since 1989.

The proliferation of small arms also threatens to erase the distinction between wartime and peacetime. The end of a war no longer guarantees that "the guns fall silent." While conflicts end and armies demobilize, the destructive force of small arms often persists. Some weapons remain in the possession of ex-combatants or civilians that may have been armed during a civil war; others are stolen and fed into the burgeoning black market. Whatever the path taken, large quantities of these weapons end up in the hands of a variety of groups eager to use them on or off the battlefield. In El Salvador, for example, up to 300,000 military weapons remained in civilian hands after the end of the civil war. In Mozambique, millions of weapons remain unaccounted for. In both countries, crime and violence are rampant.

Possession of a variety of small arms—predomi-



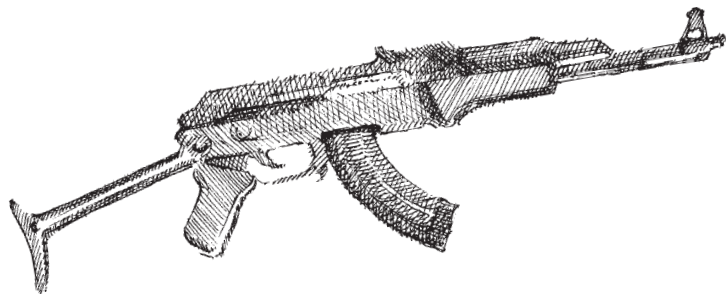
ILLUSTRATIONS BY LUCINDA LEVINE

nantly pistols, rifles, and machine guns—has become widespread in many societies. Firearms filter far beyond armies and police forces into the hands of organized crime, separatists and other armed opposition groups, drug traffickers, terrorists, private security forces, paramilitary groups, and vigilante squads. To the extent that ordinary citizens feel that the state fails to provide them with a sense of security, they too are increasingly arming themselves.

Adding small arms into areas where instability and unresolved tensions are brewing can prove explosive. The dispersal of arms empowers those least hesitant to use violent means to act with impunity, and sometimes escalates minor disputes into major carnage. In Colombia, right-wing paramilitaries take it upon themselves to capture, convict, and sentence suspected guerrilla supporters at gunpoint. In Kenya, with the influx of automatic weapons from war zones in neighboring Sudan and Somalia, traditionally low-key skirmishes between rival cattle herders are escalating into deadly clashes. Small arms cripple societies in an array of ways. Their proliferation has thwarted the consolidation of still-weak democracies; compromised the reconstruction of war-torn societies; obstructed social and economic development and unravelled past accomplishments; and hindered the emergence of vibrant civil societies that are equipped to address the political, social, economic, and environmental challenges of today. Small in caliber, these weapons are big in impact.

## FROM COLTS TO KALASHNIKOVS

Firearms have been around for centuries, but technological “advances” during the past 150 years or so have made them much more lethal and staggeringly more numerous. In 1836, Samuel Colt introduced his first



The AK-47 is compact and easily concealed “and therefore an obvious weapon for guerrillas, terrorists, and similar irregular organizations and it now appears to be almost universally used all over the world in this role,” notes *The New Illustrated Guide to Modern Rifles & Sub-Machine Guns*. With more than 70 million AK-47s made, it is one of the most effective and devastating killing tools the world has ever known.

revolver, and when his Hartford, Connecticut factory opened in 1853, it revolutionized the manufacture of small arms by employing machine tools on a large scale. Shortly thereafter, in 1860, the Winchester repeating rifle was introduced—the same year that the Gatling machine gun was invented, capable of firing hundreds of rounds per minute. The first fully-automatic machine gun, developed in Britain, was invented in 1882 and adopted in 1889 by the British Army. The 20th century brought further refinements and true mass production. During World War II, huge quantities of small arms were manufactured. The United States alone churned out some 20 million machine guns, assault rifles, carbines, pistols, and revolvers between 1940 and 1945.

A watershed event in the history of firearms came in 1947 when Mikhail Kalashnikov, a tinkered-turned-Soviet hero, invented what became known as the AK-47 assault rifle. Simple and robust, it became one of the most effective and devastating killing tools the world has ever known. More than 70 million Kalashnikovs have been manufactured in the former Soviet Union and nine other countries. Most of these are still in use, in the armies of 78 countries and in countless guerrilla groups the world over. Altogether, more than 100 million military-style assault rifles are thought to exist worldwide.

Gun manufacturers have continued to refine small arms, making them lighter, easier to use, more precise, and more devastating in their impact. The U.S. Army, for instance, this year disclosed a plan to field a new assault rifle by 2006 that will “shoot around corners,” pack more lethal power than earlier models, and offer more precision through night-vision scopes, lasers, microchips, and thermal imagers that detect humans by their heat.

In a world in which a single nuclear bomb could level an entire city, assault rifles, machine guns, and small mortars may seem to have relatively little significance. But their impact is easily underestimated: small arms are responsible for more deaths than all other weapons put together—chemical weapons, missiles, tanks, fighter planes. Despite this fact, they have been poorly tracked, minimally regulated, and paid scant attention to. The same characteristics that have long led policymakers to underestimate the importance of small arms also make them easy to acquire and handle—and hard to trace and control:

- Small arms are affordable. For just \$50 million—roughly the cost of a single modern jet fighter—it is possible to equip 200,000 people with assault rifles.
- Small arms require no training to maintain and operate. So, just about anyone can use them.
- Many small weapons are of such light weight

and can be assembled and reassembled with such ease that children as young as 10 years of age can use them. In 1995 and 1996, a quarter of a million children took part in gun fights.

- They are easy to conceal and smuggle. Small arms are readily available on a burgeoning black market, and therefore easy for guerrilla groups, criminal organizations, and other interested buyers to obtain.
- Small arms have a long “life,” making it possible for them to be recycled from one conflict to another. Small arms of World War II vintage, and some even of World War I vintage, are still used in conflicts today.

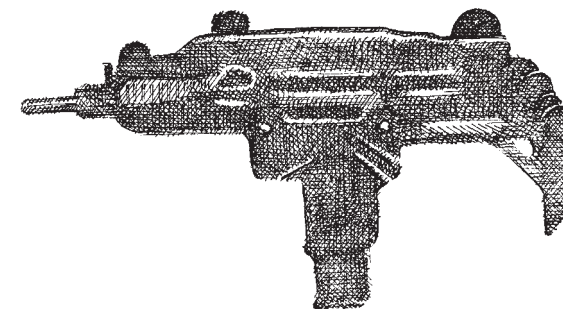
Because there has been little effort to track and control these types of weapons, there is no hard data on the quantities of small arms in circulation, or even the number that are added from new production each year. Gasjit Singh, director of Defense Studies and Analyses in New Delhi, India, puts the number of military-style firearms in worldwide circulation at 500 million. Other evidence suggests that civilian-type firearms, too, number in the hundreds of millions. Based on these estimates, at least one firearm exists for every ten people in the world.

## A FLOOD OF WEAPONS

With small arms functioning as a kind of infectious agent, war is increasingly moving beyond the domain of governments and into the streets, countrysides, and backwoods of countries the world over. High-powered weapons are more accessible than ever before. In addition to those already in circulation, the weapons industry produces several millions, if not tens of millions, of small arms each year. Among the largest producers are the former Soviet Union, the United States, China, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Israel. With a steady stream of new supplies and a vast stockpile already in existence, access to and distribution of these small arms is essentially out of control.

A plethora of legal and illegal trading networks set up to reap profits or political gain, has spread arms far beyond the borders of the producer countries. Vast quantities of firearms were provided by the two superpowers during the Cold War, either at heavily discounted prices or for free, and many of these weapons are still in circulation today. Commercial sales involving private companies are now the most important source of transfers.

In addition to legitimate sales, there are many secret and illegal deals, including clandestine arms deliveries by governments to insurgent and separatist groups in other countries. The international black market is being fed by legions of private arms mer-



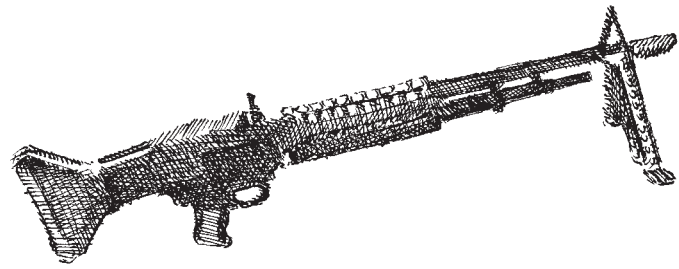
The UZI sub-machine gun, one of the most widely used post-WWII guns, “is a most effective arm for street fighting,” reports *The New Illustrated Guide to Modern Rifles & Sub-Machine Guns*. Use of the Israeli-made UZI has been documented in Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Ireland, Sudan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Guatemala, and Iran.

chants and criminal organizations. Although reliable numbers are difficult to come by, black market sales appear to have greatly expanded in recent years, says Professor Michael Klare, director of the Five College Program in Peace and World Security Studies in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Often, weapon sales involve the barter of arms for drugs, timber, gems, ivory, rhino horns, and other commodities—or at least the financing of arms purchases through the sale of such commodities. In Sierra Leone, for instance, both government and rebel soldiers plundered diamond mines in the early 1990s; the rebels then exchanged diamonds for AK-47s and rocket launchers from a warlord in neighboring Liberia.

Many of the weapons being used today are captured by insurgent forces, or stolen and sold off by soldiers who are either corrupt or destitute. In Somalia, following the army’s disintegration at the peak of the civil war in early 1992, some 500,000 weapons ended up in the hands of competing warlords. In Russia, destitution and deterioration of the armed forces virtually invites soldiers to sell off portions of the immense arsenal accumulated during Soviet times. During the Chechen war, for instance, poorly equipped and starving Russian soldiers commonly traded their Kalashnikovs for food.

Rather than dismantle or destroy surplus weapons, many countries re-sell or give away their extra small arms stocks, giving these weapons a new lease on life. In the early 1990s, Germany bestowed 304,000 formerly East German Kalashnikovs and 83 million rounds of ammunition on Turkey, which has persecuted ethnic Kurds within its borders. There are also the surpluses that get illicitly transferred from one hotspot of the world to another. For example, roughly two thirds of the \$6 billion to \$9 billion worth of weapons supplied to Afghan resis-



The M-60 machine gun—along with pistols and revolvers, rifles, assault rifles, hand grenades, anti-personnel landmines, grenade launchers, and recoilless rifles—is classified under the rubric of “small arms,” which include civilian and military firearms that can be carried by an individual. The M-60, the U.S. army’s “general purpose” machine gun, has been used by factions in Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

tance fighters by the United States in the 1980s were diverted to other recipients. Some of these weapons were peddled to Pakistan’s Sindh and Northwest Frontier provinces. They were smuggled into civil war plagued Tajikistan, into India’s Punjab region, to Muslims in northern India who feel increasingly threatened by Hindu extremists, and into Kashmir, where they increased the severity of the violence between Indian forces and pro-independence militants.

By accident or by design, leftover weapons of war are circulating over and over again to new hotspots. Guns left behind by the United States in Vietnam in the 1970s showed up in the Middle East and Central America; U.S. and Soviet armaments pumped into Central America in the 1980s are now part of a black market feeding violence in Colombia and Mexico; weapons from Lebanon’s civil war of the 1970s and 1980s were used in Bosnia; leftover weapons from conflicts in Mozambique and Angola are now being smuggled into South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia; and in a recent exposé in the *New York Times*, Raymond Bonner traced arms flows from the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and Mozambique to the Tamil Tigers, the guerrillas waging a bloody struggle for Tamil independence in Sri Lanka.

Weak law enforcement and gun control laws in countries with large numbers of arms in circulation have an incalculable spillover effect in other nations because they make trafficking an easy option. The United States, for instance, is a major source for black-market arms in Latin America. The Mexican government, in particular, has expressed growing alarm at the torrent of illegal U.S. firearms flowing to drug cartels and guerrilla groups in Mexican cities.

Today, perhaps \$3 billion worth of small arms and light weapons are legally shipped across borders each year; the illegal trade has been estimated at anywhere from \$2 billion to \$10 billion. Many analysts assume that roughly half the total small arms transfers world-

wide—about \$3 billion worth—are illegal. Clearly, several millions of small arms are traded each year, at immeasurable cost to the countries they infect.

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF A HEAVILY ARMED WORLD

There are a plethora of factors underlying today’s armed conflicts, including such “old-fashioned” themes as the repression of ethnic or religious minorities and liberation struggles to throw off the yokes of dictatorial regimes. However, resource depletion and environmental degradation are playing an increasingly significant role in violent conflicts. Aggravated by demographic pressures and social inequities, violence is spilling out of tensions over scarce resources such as water and land, and out of increasingly bitter protests against large-scale development and resource-extraction projects such as dams, logging operations, or mines.

These developments do not have to lead to violence. But small arms often act as a catalyst. “The abundance of arms *at every level of society* means that any increase in inter-communal tensions and hostility will entail an increased likelihood of armed violence and bloodshed,” says Michael Klare. In stressed and deeply polarized societies, the easy availability of massive quantities of such weapons literally invites violent responses to unresolved problems. The abundance of weapons empowers those who see the use of violence as a legitimate solution, and overshadows those who otherwise might develop and employ peaceful ways of addressing society’s challenges.

Desperate people whose hopes have worn thin are more likely to turn to violent “solutions,” explains Dan Smith, director of the Peace Research Institute. “When the conditions of ordinary life are a violence, a violent response is hardly surprising.” Those who have learned no other skills than handling weapons can conceive of few alternatives to violence. And those who reap profits and power under these circumstances—warlords, traffickers of illegal commodities, criminal bands extorting “protection” payments, looters of humanitarian aid supplies, and others—have little incentive to change course. In these desperate situations, the violence feeds on itself in an unbroken cycle. Ethnic Albanians in Serbia’s Kosovo region are tempted to resort to violence to escape Serbian repression and achieve independence, instead of continuing on the path of nonviolent resistance. Antagonistic neighbors in El Salvador settle scores with hand grenades instead of words. In Jonesboro, Arkansas, 11 and 13 year old kids get “even” with classmates not by trading insults but by shooting them with high-powered rifles.

Gross disparities in wealth and power and ability

## THE WORLD OF SMALL ARMS

*Fueled by growing pressures in many regions of the world—social inequities, political injustices, demographic pressures, resource depletion, and environmental degradation—the availability of guns has sparked an escalation of violence. Here are a few examples of a long list of situations in which adding guns to the mix of tensions has acted as a catalyst for people in desperate situations to turn to violent “solutions.”*

### UNITED STATES

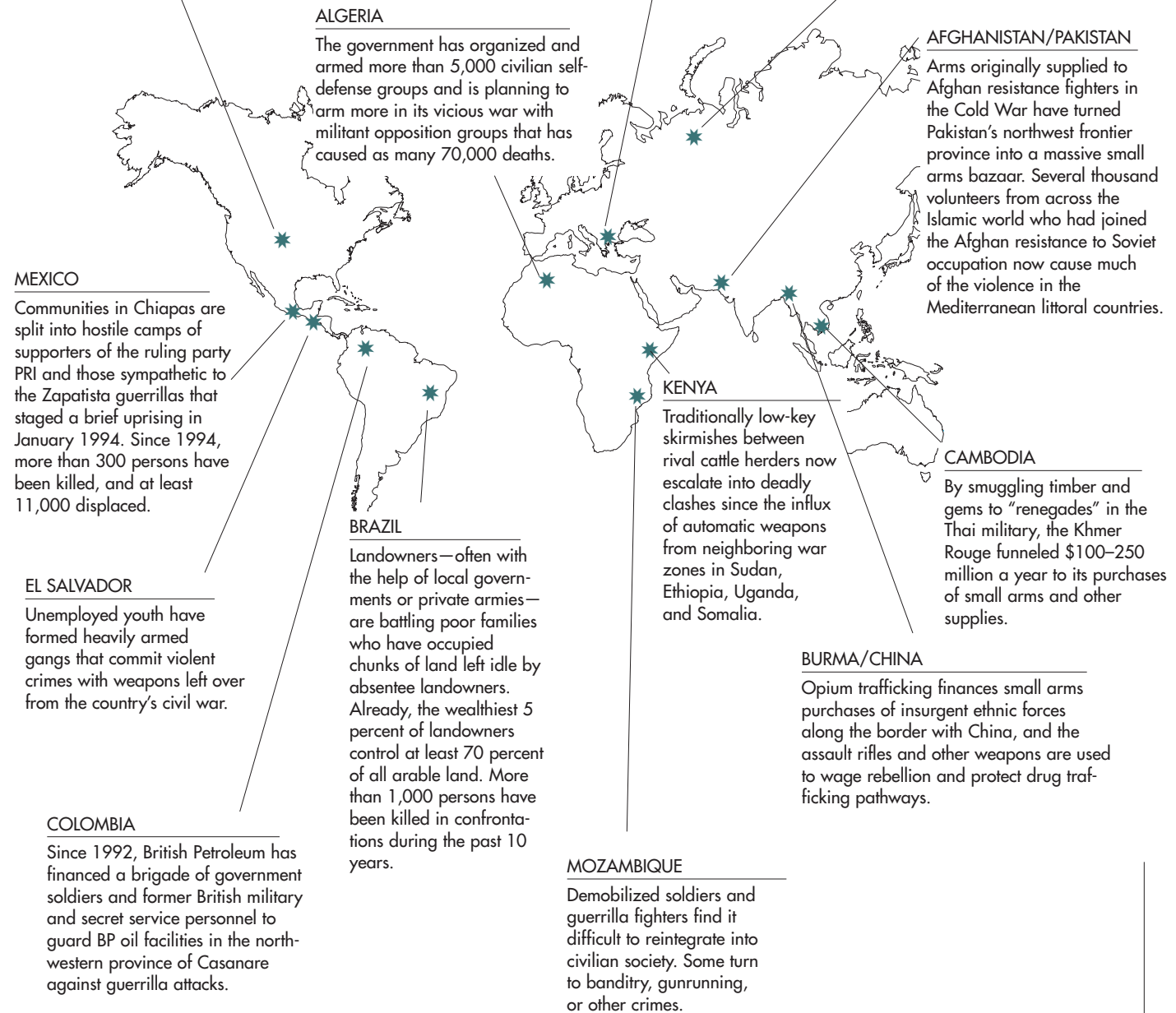
More people are killed with guns in a typical week than in all of Western Europe in a whole year, and more in a single day than in a year in Japan. U.S. adolescents are 12 times more likely to be killed by gunfire than youngsters in all other industrialized countries.

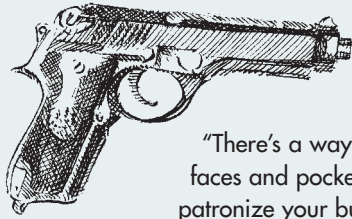
### ALBANIA

In parts of northern Albania, medieval feuds are resurfacing. Revenge killings have skyrocketed, frequently carried out with modern automatic weapons looted from military depots during 1997 riots.

### RUSSIA

Difficult economic and political transitions have spawned rising crime, mafia-like organizations, and gangland-style killings between business rivals. There were almost 1,000 contract murders in 1996 alone. Among the general population, ownership of arms—most of them illegal—is exploding, fed in part by small arms stolen from military depots.





"There's a way to help ensure that new faces and pocketbooks will continue to patronize your business: Use the schools." — from a column by Grits Gresham in a gun-industry trade magazine on strategies to "help [school children] develop an interest in our industry."

## "NEW BLOOD" FOR GUN MARKETS

Having saturated their traditional market in the United States by the 1980s, domestic arms manufacturers are now targeting their guns at a largely untapped market: women and children. According to a report by the Violence Policy Center and the Global Survival Network, gun companies are borrowing techniques developed by tobacco companies to, as the National Rifle Association (NRA) puts it, "introduce as many of our nation's youth as possible to the legitimate use of ... firearms."

While more than 2,200 U.S. children younger than 14 died from unintentional shootings between 1986 and 1995, the gun lobby continues to campaign to "bring women and youngsters to the shooting sports." In 1994 the NRA non-profit wing doled out \$350,000 to the NRA Women's Issues and Programs for its "Refuse to be a Victim Program," and paid over \$500,000 for its youth education programs. Eddie the Eagle—the NRA's version of Joe Camel—is an important component of these programs, which popularize guns under the auspices of gun "familiarization" and "safety education." This cool cartoon crusader for the NRA "never mentions the risks associated with firearms and their use," finds the report, but focuses on making kids more aware of guns to bring "new blood" into the market, as one firearm manufacturer puts it.

to cope with life's pressures tend to tear at the fabric of society and lead to polarization. If deep social and economic grievances are unable to find expression or are ignored, they can easily assume violent forms.

Conflicts over resource access and degradation often pit the groups that take the brunt of the adverse impact against those who tend to benefit. Thus, Mayan peasants in Chiapas struggle against unfair distribution of community lands to wealthy ranchers. Bougainvilleans fight to close a copper mine that has devastated their land while giving them precious lit-

tle in economic benefits. The Ogoni stage nonviolent protests against massive oil pollution, only to be violently oppressed by Nigeria's military regime. But sometimes the fighting simply takes place between groups that are equally affected and equally weak. In parts of East and West Africa, for instance, conflict sometimes breaks out between small farmers and pastoralists, forced into growing competition over scarce water and land. Because they have little capacity to resist the larger forces at work, they strike at those perceived to be their competitors. With the influx of modern assault rifles, these clashes have grown more deadly in recent years. The cost of violence is measured not just in lives lost or shattered; it is also measured in foreclosing options and shortcutting debate, depriving society of the opportunity to deal with problems creatively.

Many of the challenges we see today are likely to intensify: demographic pressures continue, environmental and resource scarcities sharpen, and social and economic disparities, having risen sharply during the past two decades, show no sign of abating. As economies globalize, as countries are uneasily and haltingly exposed to foreign cultures and influences, and communities often desperately struggle to adapt, disputes and frictions will steadily increase—and so will the opportunities for people to choose confrontation over cooperation.

## FORTIFYING OURSELVES?

As concern about crime and violence grows, individuals, groups, and businesses are arming themselves and are investing growing amounts of money in private security ventures. The affluent retreat into walled-in exclusive compounds guarded day and night or, as in São Paulo, Brazil, behind electrified fences.

In the United States, annual spending for private security reached \$52 billion in 1990, compared with a \$30 billion budget for the country's police forces. This is more than any country other than the United States spends on its military. By the year 2000, U.S. expenditures on private law enforcement may reach \$100 billion. Public and private security expenses consume 13 to 15 percent of Latin America's combined gross domestic product—surpassing the region's expenditures on welfare programs. At the same time, an estimated one quarter of the productive capacity of Colombia and El Salvador is lost due to violence in these countries.

Private security services of all stripes—some armed, some not—are being propelled to prominence. The United States, Britain, Australia, and South Africa are among the countries where private security forces outnumber not only the public police but even the national armed forces. Even as private police forces mushroom, public police units are

becoming militarized; in the United States, hundreds of millions of dollars worth of surplus military equipment has been transferred to local police.

But these measures are in many ways an escalation of, rather than a solution to, the problem of growing violence. The new quest for self-defense has sparked localized arms races in some areas, ratcheting up the level of armaments and further intensifying the potential for violence. As people attempt to find improved security in their homes, neighborhoods, and cities, a better solution may be to work on solving the underlying causes of violence, rather than further entrenching themselves with more guns and more armed security forces. Defusing the causes of violence will act as the preventative medicine needed to halt further escalation of conflict through the use of small arms.

There is now growing recognition in many societies that the epidemic of guns needs to be addressed. Several efforts are underway, for example, to curb the illegal trade in firearms through measures such as export controls, sharing national law enforcement information, and marking weapons so they can be better tracked. The Organization of American States agreed on a convention for this purpose in 1997. Policies against arms trafficking are being discussed by the European Union and the United Nations, both through a special panel of governmental small arms experts and through the U.N.'s Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The police forces of South Africa and Mozambique are cooperating in tracking and seizing illegal arms.

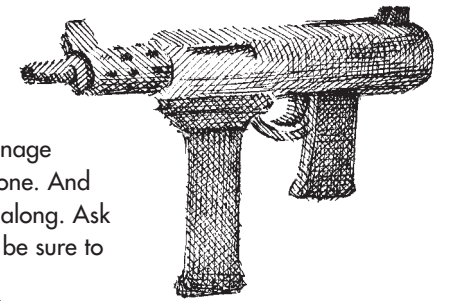
But limiting attention to the problem of illegal guns is bound to backfire: after all, many illegal guns once were sold legally. A clear dividing line between legal and illicit transfers is impossible to draw. Focusing on black markets and criminal suppliers or buyers alone also means that the biggest purveyors of arms—governments—are largely off the hook.

Several countries have in fact tried to go beyond such limited measures. One approach is to take the more dangerous guns—automatic and semi-automatic firearms—out of circulation through so-called "buy-back" programs. The most ambitious effort to date was launched in Australia: prompted by the massacre of 35 people in 1996 by a lone gunman, the government bought back more than 600,000 weapons. Other efforts, many considerably smaller in scale, have been undertaken in such diverse countries as Britain, Nicaragua, Colombia, Mozambique, and the United States.

In Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti, Mozambique, Somalia, and Cambodia, peacekeeping missions have in recent years sought to collect weapons after conflicts came to an end. But these endeavors met with mixed success at best; the peacekeepers managed to

The AP9 assault pistol "is one mean-looking dude, considered cool and Ramboish by the teenage crowd ... Take a look at one. And let your teenage son tag along. Ask him what he thinks. And be sure to carry your checkbook."

*Guns & Ammo Handguns Annual, 1989, p 49.*



collect only a portion of the arms in circulation, and either had no mandate or insufficient resources to retrieve weapons from the civilian population. And only a portion of the collected weapons were destroyed.

Given that many parts of the world are already awash in small arms, much energy goes into dealing with arms already in circulation. But new production and trade are nevertheless important issues as well. A glimmer of hope in this regard is emerging from West Africa, where 15 governments are considering a voluntary moratorium on the export, import, and manufacture of light weapons. The moratorium, which will likely be formally endorsed in July 1998, is to last for three years before an assessment of its success is undertaken; although the program focuses on West Africa, all African nations are invited to join. Its leaders believe the moratorium could become a model for other regions of the world.

Numerous local, national, and regional campaigns are now under way—some concerned with domestic gun control, others with restricting international arms transfers. These efforts received a tremendous boost from the successful campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines that culminated in a global treaty signed in December 1997. Although landmines stand out due to the gruesome wounds they inflict and the indiscriminate way in which they maim and kill, that campaign was, in some ways, a trail blazer for a broader small arms campaign. The landmine campaign raised public awareness in an amazingly short stretch of time. It asserted that social, developmental, and humanitarian concerns were paramount to military and arms control issues. And it featured a successful working coalition of NGOs and like-minded governments. Mobilizing a small arms campaign will be harder; whereas landmines were stigmatized fairly easily by pictures of injured children, many firearms are regarded as legitimate for personal protection and to outfit police units and armed forces. The issue is not to seek a blanket ban, but rather effective restrictions on their trade and possession. The struggle has just begun.

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