

# **A SCOURGE OF GUNS**

**The Diffusion of Small Arms and  
Light Weapons in Latin America**

**Michael Klare and David Andersen**

**Arms Sales Monitoring Project  
Federation of American Scientists**

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Light Weapons in Latin America**

**By Michael Klare and David Andersen**  
*With a Foreword by Oscar Arias Sánchez and*  
*Afterword by Graciela Uribe de Lozano*

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## **The Federation of American Scientists**

Founded in 1945 by atomic scientists of the Manhattan Project, the Federation of American Scientists (F.A.S.) is dedicated to the responsible use of science and technology. As a non-profit organization licensed to lobby in the public interest, F.A.S. is uniquely qualified to bring the scientific perspective to the legislative arena through direct lobbying, expert testimony and grassroots work. Jeremy J. Stone is the President of FAS. Carl Kaysen, Professor Emeritus, Program in Defense and Arms Control Studies at M.I.T., currently serves as the elected Chairman of the Federation.

The F.A.S. Fund is the research arm of the Federation, which engages in analysis and public education on a broad range of science, technology, and public policy issues. Jeremy J. Stone is the President of the Fund. Frank von Hippel, Professor of Public Policy and International Affairs at Princeton University, is the current Chairman.

## **The Arms Sales Monitoring Project**

Established in 1990, the F.A.S. Arms Sales Monitoring Project seeks a reduction in the world-wide production and trade of weapons. The ASM Project works in alliance with civic groups and with the media to highlight the impact and costs of U.S. and global weapons exports. Lora Lumpe directs the project.

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*To the victims of gun violence  
in North, South, and Central America.*

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## FOREWORD

WHEN, FOR THE first time before a United States audience, I expressed the idea that exporting arms to developing countries is comparable to shipping drugs to industrialized countries, there were reactions of discomfort and rejection. From my point of view, both the arms trade and drug trafficking constitute a sinister *quid pro quo* in a market of death and suffering for millions of human beings. On our continent, the heart of this market lies in the uninterrupted displacement of thousands of kilograms of cocaine to the north and thousands of weapons to the south.

Nevertheless, for many the correlation between the arms trade and drug trafficking is invalid because, although the final results are the same—death, suffering and misery, the two differ in that the sale of drugs is illegal, while that of arms is usually legal. In countries that produce and export arms, the power and influence of arms traffickers is public and respectable; in countries that produce and export drugs, the power and influence of drugs traffickers is considered criminal and immoral.

For Latin America, the effects of arms trafficking could not be more lethal. Weapons feed violence in all forms: military, political, and criminal. Even worse, weapons cause many governments to neglect the most basic needs of their populations: arms budgets divert a great deal of resources that, otherwise, would be dedicated to improving health, education, and housing, to mention only a few needs.

The initial observation of this excellent work by Michael Klare and David Andersen is significant: if Latin America as a buyer and as a vendor accounts for a relatively small portion of the arms market (in dollar terms), it is because its primary acquisitions and sales are concentrated in light-weight weapons. All studies indicate that, in both the military and criminal sphere, the greatest percentage of violent deaths occur from the use of light weapons

and small arms. Subsequently, the impact of the sale of these weapons in Latin America is greater than can be deduced from the relative size of the military budgets in this region.

For this reason, it is an honor to present this short preamble to *A Scourge of Guns*, which offers important testimony in a concise, professional, and convincing manner. As a Latin American worried by the increase of violence in our region, I thank and congratulate my friend Lora Lumpe and the Federation of American Scientists for publishing this book, and I urge them to continue to monitor and denounce the deadly sale of weapons.

—*Oscar Arias Sánchez*  
*San Jose, Costa Rica*  
*July 1996*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IN PREPARING this volume, we had to contend with a significant dearth of published data on light weapons trafficking. None of the basic reference works in the field—the *SIPRI Yearbook*, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers*, and the annual statistics published by the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress—provides detailed information on this topic. Accordingly, we were forced to assemble bits and pieces of data from many disparate sources—a difficult process in which we received a great deal of assistance from our colleagues at the Federation of American Scientists and the international community of arms trade researchers. We wish, in these few paragraphs, to thank these dedicated people for their important contributions to this study.

First and foremost, our gratitude goes to Lora Lumpe and Paul Pineo of the Arms Sales Monitoring Project of the Federation of American Scientists. Both helped enormously in the collection of data, the processing of Freedom of Information Act requests, and the maintenance of the data base on which we depended so heavily. Without their unstinting assistance, we would never have been able to complete this study. Lora also played a crucial role as our editor and publisher, and we thank her profusely for her fantastic work.

Next, our very special gratitude is due to Oscar Arias, former President of Costa Rica and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, and to Graciela Uribe de Lozano of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Colombia. They graciously took time from their busy schedules to write, respectively, a foreword and afterword for *A Scourge of Guns*. As leaders in the effort to draw increased world attention to the dangers posed by uncontrolled arms trafficking, we are especially honored by their appearance in this volume.

We also wish to thank the many others in the research community who supplied us with information, read and critiqued the manuscript, or assisted in some other fashion. In particular, our gratitude to Cynthia Arnson of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Nicole Ball of the Overseas Development Council, Kate Doyle of the National Security Archives, Susannah Dyer of the British-American Security Information Council, Steve Goose of Human Rights Watch, William Hartung of the World Policy Institute, Adam Isacson of the Center for International Policy, David Isenberg of the Center for Defense Information, Ed Laurance of the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and Stephanie Neuman of Columbia University.

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Any factual errors, or errors in interpretation, are solely our responsibility.

—*Michael Klare and David Andersen*  
*Amherst, Mass. and Washington, D.C.*

