

National Firearms Act Trade & Collectors Association®

STATEMENT for

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"Power Through Experience"

Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to offer these written remarks and to have them placed in the record of this conference. My name is Jeffrey E. Folloder. I am the Executive Director and an Officer of the National Firearms Act Trade & Collectors Association®, an ethical group of small arms manufacturers, importers, exporters, dealers and collectors. The views that I express in this statement are my own.

Too many people suffer the horror of armed violence and armed conflict around the world. And reducing this suffering is perhaps the most noble of causes. So I commend the efforts of all persons gathered here to champion the cause of humanity. Clearly, it is unacceptable to deny the compelling need to lessen the suffering of humanity.

I, like all of you, am deeply moved by the tragic stories that surround us. It is impossible not to feel some pain, even from a distance. I, too, am horrified by criminal armed violence against innocents, and of civilians targeted indiscriminately or affected disproportionately by armed conflict.

One simply cannot ignore the stories like those featured in the Oxfam award-winning film *Bang for Your Buck* from a few years ago, which highlights the pervasive hazard of hand grenades in post-conflict Burundian civil society. I internalize stories like those of Modeste Hamimenshe, who lost both a husband and daughter from a petty dispute settled by a grenade attack there. And I am deeply distressed by determined despots and callous criminals who willfully flout international and domestic laws and commit human rights abuses and other heinous crimes.

I do struggle to reconcile all this with my personal experience and the scholarship that shows that for most developing or fragile states, deficient domestic regulation of legal firearms possession combined with theft, and loss or corrupt sale from official inventories tends to be a bigger source of weapons concern than illicit trafficking across borders.[1]

I struggle, too, with the widely held but nonetheless false global assumption by many here that small arms are simply incompatible with civil society, that more weapons causes more armed violence at the societal level, everywhere. Clearly, this assumption is valid for States with pre-existing governance challenges, but it is not valid globally.

One need only look at the abundance of considered and effective regulation of small arms in the United States and how, since the early 1990s, rates of gun-related homicide, suicide and accidental death have decreased by nearly 50%, 15% and 70% respectively, and all the while gun ownership and availability increased.[2] This is not to say the former caused the latter but to express that fact that more arms in civil society does not always mean more violence, and to submit that reducing armed violence depends mostly on sound local governance, promoting the rule of law, and eradicating corruption.

I am left wondering how, honestly, an ATT could make a meaningful humanitarian impact in the Burundis of the world, and I question the value of any form of ATT that does not recognize that the cause of armed violence is fundamentally local and driven mostly by uneven if not absent rule of law for a limited number of seriously affected States.

It is also unhelpful that some fail to make distinctions between those who perpetrate human rights abuses and other violent crimes, which are already prohibited, and the inherent legitimacy of States to acquire and possess instruments to maintain public order, security, and to defend one's sovereignty. To be effective, it would seem an ATT must also distinguish between those who wrongly perpetrate human rights abuses and other crimes and already lawful, responsible and regulated trade not just in the service of sovereignty and security but of individual liberty, and recreation where permitted by national law.

The villain is not the licensed American maker of the rifle, the designer of the pistol or the distributor of the shotgun. The villain is neither the licensed exporter nor the importer. I know this to be true as an industry professional who necessarily and enthusiastically works with American federal regulators. I personally assist in formulating official policy, regulation and guidance in what is a truly collaborative endeavor. I submit that the overwhelming majority of the firms comprising the US firearms industry are run by principled, hardworking, and conscientious people. And I flatly reject the notion still held by many that the US small arms industry is somehow liable for the consequences of armed violence and armed conflict in places where improving local governance and institutional capacity is clearly a primary cause for concern.

No ATT can eliminate the unfortunate human costs of armed violence or armed conflict, nor can it eliminate or truly restrain the arbitrary deprivation of rights by those who chose to ignore existing international humanitarian and human rights law. A treaty that ignores this fact while suggesting the blame belongs to makers, marketers, and collectors of legitimate instruments of foreign policy, sovereignty, public safety, and lawful private recreation is little more than misguided aspiration and should be rejected.

In conclusion, Mr. President, clearly, what animates us all is the shockingly gruesome and rights abusive situation in exceptionally disordered States. Rightly understood, the change imperative for this is improved local governance, accountability, and customized approaches in affected countries and regions, and not for one-size-fits-all outside-in global governance. Aside from not making important distinctions among States, and being flawed by not focusing on root causes at the local level, the outside-in global governance approach buys into a developmental defeatism, and, arguably, perpetuates a psychically damaging dependence on the Global North by some less fortunate states in the Global South. We can and must do better.

NOTES

[1] The table below details the most current official data on firearms related deaths published by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Firearms Deaths in the United States, 1993-2010

Year	Homicides		Suicides		Accidents		Population
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	
1993	18,253	6.75	18,940	7.34	1,521	0.58	259,918,595
1994	17,527	6.45	18,765	7.18	1,356	0.51	263,125,826
1995	15,551	5.69	18,503	6.99	1,225	0.46	266,278,403
1996	14,037	5.1	18,166	6.79	1,134	0.42	269,394,291
1997	13,252	4.77	17,566	6.48	981	0.36	272,646,932
1998	11,798	4.21	17,424	6.34	866	0.31	275,854,116
1999	10,828	3.82	16,599	5.96	824	0.29	279,040,181
2000	10,801	3.79	16,586	5.9	776	0.27	281,421,906
2001	11,348	3.93	16,869	5.9	802	0.28	285,081,556
2002	11,829	4.06	17,108	5.91	762	0.26	287,803,914
2003	11,920	4.06	16,907	5.77	730	0.25	290,326,418
2004	11,624	3.93	16,750	5.65	649	0.22	293,045,739
2005	12,352	4.16	17,002	5.66	789	0.27	295,753,151
2006	12,791	4.27	16,883	5.54	642	0.21	298,593,212
2007	12,632	4.19	17,352	5.63	613	0.2	301,579,895
2008	12,179	4.02	18,223	5.82	592	0.19	304,374,846
2009	11,493	3.77	18,735	5.92	554	0.18	307,006,550
2010	11,078	3.62	19,392	6.28	606	0.20	308,745,538
Change '93-'10	-39%	-46%	2%	-14%	-60%	-66%	19%

Source: Office of Statistics and Programming, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC; NCHS Vital Statistics System for numbers of deaths. Bureau of Census for population estimates. Age adjusted rate per 100,000 people, rounded to two significant digits. Raw data retrieved from http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/mortrate10_us.html. Data last accessed March, 2013

[2] Owen Greene and Nicholas Marsh, eds. *Small Arms, Crime and Conflict: Global Governance and the Threat of Armed Violence*. Routledge: 2012. P. 91