

# The Push for Gun Control

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*Soon after the 2012 election night and Barack Obama was called as the winner; the newly reelected President announced the United States would be supporting the United Nation's objective to push gun control internationally.*

The new presidential term has yet to begin, but shortly after the presidential election for 2012 was resolved in favor of Barack Obama, he announced that the United States would support the United Nations' (UN) push for legislation regulating the international sale of firearms. The UN's disarmament committee quickly responded by approving a resolution stating that talks regarding an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) would begin in March (reuters.com 1). The UN has argued in favor of such legislation in view of the currently lax regulations regarding international arms trade.

Currently, nations can sell ordnance or weapons to most other countries. According to the website for the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), a group that aids in international security-related dialogue and cooperation, what international regulations do exist to prevent arms trade to human rights violators "are often circumvented by suppliers and recipients alike" (ISN 1).

According to the United Nation's Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the new legislation would restrict the sale of all weapons and ammunition including small arms by any nation guilty of human rights violations. The ATT would be in keeping with the UN's stated responsibilities, which include:

- Supporting negotiations for a global arms trade treaty

- Making information available on arms transfers between countries through the UN Register of Conventional Arms, and
- Addressing the illicit trade in small arms (un.org 1)

The question asked by the United States first should obviously be, "How does this affect the nation?" The proposed treaty states each country will have its intra-national gun trade laws unaffected; the primary focus would be international sales. However, the UN's assurances haven't comforted everyone. Professor Larry Bell, a teacher of architecture and space architecture at the University of Houston and a contributor to the American business magazine *Forbes*, argues that the result of the arms trade treaty would be the restriction of personal gun rights, citing that Iran's UN representative has been selected for "a top Arms Trade Treaty planning conference position" (*Forbes* 1), a particular problem since Iran has been typically recalcitrant when it comes to dealing with international pressure to avoid nuclear weapons capability (allvoices.com 1).

While the European Union (EU) continues to work towards sanctions against Iran for its refusal to halt its progress in nuclear reactor science, the UN is placing it in a position to influence what would be global arms legislation. If this were insufficient, it is also worth keeping in mind that laws established by the UN have been used before now, even when defeated, to undermine the control central governments exert over environmental regulations. Prof. Bell cites the "Agenda 21" movement by the UN, which, while defeated as a UN treaty, became a "soft law." Soft laws, which include UN action plans, resolutions, and declarations (Eurofound 1), do not have as much legal force as traditional law, but do exert influence over those who live in their jurisdiction. As an action plan, Agenda 21 became an organization dedicated to bringing local governmental bodies from UN nations into harmony with the UN's vision of environmental regulation on industry, public health, etc. In short, if the UN couldn't get constituent nations to swallow the whole treaty, they would push it in through the back door (*Forbes* 2).

With this level of manipulation having worked in the past, citizens of the United States and other nations who are not in favor of civil gun disarmament should be greatly concerned. For one thing, as Fox News columnist John Lott has observed in his article on the ATT, imposing legal restrictions does not guarantee the elimination of illegal activity:

"Indeed, as the surges in murder rates after gun bans in the US and around the world show, such regulations don't stop criminals from getting guns. A huge percentage of violent crime in the US is drug gang related, and just as those gangs can bring in the illegal drugs, they can bring in the weapons that they use to protect that valuable property" (gun control 1).

Even if the ATT were to succeed in limiting the sale of guns and other weapons from human rights abusers, the influence of the treaty need not stop there, and with Great Britain and the United States' executive branch both in favor of limiting civilian gun owners' rights, it would only be a matter of time before international law becomes a very private matter.

# It's going to be a Brown Christmas



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