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Canada and the brokering provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty

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February 2013

Canada will join other UN member states for the “final” negotiations of an international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in March 2013. Canadian opposition to a brokering provision of the draft treaty text undermines its international commitments to control brokering and ignores related national regulatory standards. Canada’s particular concern about “extraterritorial” jurisdiction would be addressed by the brokering provisions of a strong ATT.

Executive summary

Since the turn of the century a growing international consensus on the need to prevent and end the illicit trafficking in conventional weapons, especially small arms and light weapons (SALW), has resulted in many multilateral agreements to strengthen national controls on SALW and other weapons transfers. Several agreements attend to the role of weapons brokers, especially those acting illegally to circumvent United Nations Security Council arms embargoes. Canada is a signatory to many of these agreements, but has yet to introduce the required national brokering regulations.

Article 8 of the draft ATT calls for national brokering regulations that many states and civil society groups view to be weak. Even so, Canada has called for an alternative text that would effectively remove *any* treaty obligation to implement brokering regulations. Canada also has taken a troubling negotiation stand by stating it will consider invoking the “reservation” provision of the treaty if its text is not adopted.

Canada’s position is based on concern about “extraterritorial” judicial responsibility for the actions of Canadians operating outside Canada. But if Canada were to support a *strong* brokering provision in the ATT, it would be supporting universal standards that would reduce and potentially eliminate Canadian responsibilities for nationals operating in other state jurisdictions.

Even now, existing Canadian regulations such as the Controlled Goods Program, as well as the examples of brokering controls in such states as the United States and the United Kingdom provide the foundation for Canada to meet international commitments to establish national brokering controls. At the final ATT negotiations in March 2013, it is in Canada’s interest to lift its objections to the draft Article 8 and argue for stronger national controls on the activities of arms brokers.

Introduction

Arms brokers generally act as go-betweens, connecting arms suppliers with weapons users. Arms brokering can be a licit or legal activity. Many governments sanction, or at least do not act to prevent, private sector support for authorized international transfers of conventional weapons. Some states have even established government or quasi-government agencies to act as brokers in support of weapons exports by their national defence industries.

In the case of Canada, this role is played by the Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC), a crown corporation that supports Canadian weapons exports by establishing back-to-back contracts between Canadian defence manufacturers or suppliers and foreign governments. The CCC acts as a guarantor to both parties, ensuring that Canadian companies receive payment, and foreign governments receive ordered military goods. The CCC is an arms broker in the sense that it brings weapons suppliers and recipients together and assists the financing of transfers of military goods and services (see Epps 2011).

Some arms brokers operate illegally. Illicit arms brokering, especially of SALW, is widely acknowledged to contribute significantly to the illicit trade in conventional weapons. Illicit brokering is considered a transnational problem, not only because most, if not all, states are affected, but also because illegal brokers notoriously operate internationally, using complex financial and logistical arrangements to cover their tracks. Recent UN reports on the implementation of Security Council arms embargoes contain numerous citations of illicit arms brokering in violation of the embargoes (UNGA 2007, p. 7).

National police forces seek to track and prevent the illicit supply of weapons to criminals by cooperating internationally (through Interpol, for example) to identify and prosecute illegal arms brokers.

The international community has responded to illicit brokering by improving standards for licit brokering. In the past 15 years, a number of multilateral conventional arms control instruments have included provisions aimed at strengthening national brokering controls and regulations, largely in response to the illicit trafficking of SALW.

Global SALW conventions and agreements, such as the 2004 UN Firearms Protocol and the 2001 Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, include national commitments to regulate small arms brokering activities. Similar provisions are included in related regional treaties, including the ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials. Some multilateral instruments, such as the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, provide guidance on brokering standards for the transfer of all conventional weapons, including SALW.

UN negotiations of the ATT have acknowledged the significance of the role that brokering plays in international transfers of conventional weapons. Civil society groups attending the negotiations have sought to emphasize the egregious humanitarian impact of illicit arms brokers, especially in conflict zones, and have argued for strong brokering controls in the Treaty.¹ Several state interventions have identified illicit brokering as a particular concern. The draft text of the Treaty from July 2012 includes Article 8 on brokering, which requires each State Party to take “appropriate” measures to regulate brokering taking place under its jurisdiction.

An effective Arms Trade Treaty will create the common international regulatory framework needed to tackle illicit brokering. International cooperation to prosecute illegal brokering is currently thwarted by weak or absent national arms transfer controls. Unscrupulous brokers take advantage of these “weakest links” to perpetrate activities that are subject to criminal penalty in states with

adequate arms transfer and brokering regulations. The high common national standards that the Arms Trade Treaty brings to the authorization of international arms transfers would strengthen weaker national controls and reduce the opportunities for illicit brokering. Additionally, the international cooperative provisions of the ATT, such as information-sharing and international cooperation and assistance, would enhance transnational investigative and judicial efforts to bring illegal arms brokers to justice (Goodman & Stedjan 2011).

Brokers and brokering

Definitions for broker and brokering activities can be found in many arms control instruments. Perhaps the clearest occur in the Draft Model Regulations for the Control of Brokers of Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. Adopted in Montreal in 2003 these regulations were to assist with states parties' implementation of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA), the 1997 treaty of the Organization of American States (OAS). According to the model regulations:

‘Broker’ or ‘Arms Broker’ means any natural or legal person who, in return for a fee, commission or other consideration, acts on behalf of others to negotiate or arrange contracts, purchases, sales or other means of transfer of firearms, their parts or components or ammunition.

Also,

‘Brokering activities’ means acting as a broker and includes manufacturing, exporting, importing, financing, mediating, purchasing, selling, transferring, transporting, freight-forwarding, supplying, and delivering firearms, their parts or components or ammunition or any other act performed by a person, that lies outside the scope of his regular business activities and that directly facilitates the brokering activities.²

The definitions contained in the model regulations apply to firearms, their parts and components, and ammunition, but they could be easily amended to apply to a wider scope of conventional weapons.

Canada and multilateral standards

Although it lacks brokering regulations, Canada is a signatory to, or a member of, several multilateral agreements and regimes that call for national brokering controls (see Table 1). Canada has signed, but not yet ratified, the Firearms Protocol supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It requires “States Parties that have not yet done so” to “consider establishing a system for regulating the activities of those who engage in brokering.” The Protocol goes on to stipulate:

Such a system could include one or more measures such as:

- (a) Requiring registration of brokers operating within their territory;
- (b) Requiring licensing or authorization of brokering; or
- (c) Requiring disclosure on import and export licences or authorizations, or accompanying documents, of the names and locations of brokers involved in the transaction.

Using stronger language, the 2001 UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons commits Canada and every other UN member state

To develop adequate national legislation or administrative procedures regulating the activities of those who engage in small arms and light weapons brokering. This legislation or procedures should include measures such as registration of brokers, licensing or authorization of brokering transactions as well as the appropriate penalties for all illicit brokering activities performed with the State's jurisdiction and control.

(Section II, Article 14)

Canada has signed (but again not ratified) the CIFTA. Articles 1 to 9 of the 2003 Model Regulations (see above) detail the rules necessary to control firearms brokers and brokering activity. Articles 2 and 4 require national authorities to license brokers. Registration under Article 3 is “largely viewed as an additional and optional element of brokering controls.” It notes, however, that “at a practical level, the information required on an application for a brokering license can provide the basis for a *de facto* registry of brokers.” Article 5 defines prohibited brokering activities, including activities that “will, or seriously threaten to” result in acts of genocide or crimes against humanity, violate human rights contrary to international law, lead to the perpetration of war crimes, violate UN Security Council embargoes and sanctions, support terrorist acts, result in diversion to illegal activities, or result in breaches of bilateral or multilateral arms control and nonproliferation agreements.

Canada is party to other instruments that require brokering regulations. As a member of the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls—a group of virtually all major arms suppliers—Canada agreed to the Elements for Effective Legislation on Arms Brokering at the 2003 Plenary of the Arrangement. The Elements call on member states to “strictly control the activities of those who engage in the brokering of conventional arms by introducing and implementing adequate laws and regulations.” The Elements include provisions on national licensing, record-keeping and information-exchange, penalties, and assistance to other participating states. Each member state is called to license activity on its own territory; “a licence may also be required regardless of where the brokering activities take place.” In addition, “participating States may also seek to limit the number of brokers.”

Table 1: Canadian international brokering commitments

Instrument containing brokering commitments	Legally binding		Politically binding
	Signed	Ratified	
UN Firearms Protocol	Yes	No	
CIFTA (OAS Firearms Convention)	Yes	No	
UN Programme of Action on small arms			Yes
Wassenaar Arrangement Elements			Yes
OSCE Principles			Yes

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Forum for Security Co-operation adopted the OSCE Principles on the Control of Brokering in Small Arms and Light Weapons in November 2004. As did other OSCE member states, Canada “reached agreement on a set of provisions fostering the control of [arms trafficking and brokering] activities through national legislation.” The provisions include licensing/record-keeping (Section III), registration and authorization (Section IV), exchange of information (Section V), and enforcement (Section VI).

The principles state that “participating States will take all the necessary measures to control brokering activities taking place within their territory.” Additionally, “participating States are encouraged to consider controlling the brokering activities outside of their territory carried out by brokers of their nationality resident or brokers who are established in their territory.”

In the 15 years since Canada signed CIFTA—and more than 10 years since UN consensus on the SALW Programme of Action—Canada has not introduced national laws or regulations on arms brokering. Canada’s most recent report on implementation of the UN Programme of Action, submitted to the 2012 PoA Review Conference, notes that “there is no specific Canadian legislation on the brokering of SALW.” Instead, the Report identifies pieces of legislation that are “related to the brokering of arms, including SALW” (Canada 2012, p. 13). These include Canada’s Special Economic Measures Act, United Nations Act, Export and Import Permits Act, Defence Production Act, Firearms Act, and the Criminal Code of Canada. It also notes:

In addition, persons who conduct business in Canada that involves the examination, possession, and/or transfer of controlled goods and/or controlled technologies must be registered with Canada’s Controlled Goods Program in order to comply with Canada’s Defence Production Act (DPA) and Controlled Goods Regulations (CGR). (p. 14)

According to the 2006 Controlled Goods Directive, the definition of controlled goods includes all Group 2 military goods on Canada’s export control list except non-restricted and restricted firearms.

Canada has not only sidestepped an important component in the global response to illicit arms trafficking by not providing a specific regulatory framework to control arms brokering, but has failed to meet core commitments of several multilateral instruments. Yet Canada would not have to break new regulatory ground to approve such controls. Quite apart from relevant existing Canadian laws and regulations, many models for regulation exist, including the CIFTA model regulations that Canadian officials helped to draft. Approximately 40 states have “enacted laws, regulations and procedures that enable various forms of control of arms brokering,” according to the 2007 report of the UN Group of Government Experts on illicit brokering (UNGA 2007).

Brokering in the Arms Trade Treaty

Recently Canada moved beyond passive avoidance of its multilateral commitments on broker regulation to active resistance to the draft brokering provisions of the international Arms Trade Treaty. Article 8 of the draft treaty text of July 26, 2012, entitled “Brokering,” states:

Each State Party shall take the appropriate measures, within its national laws, to regulate brokering taking place under its jurisdiction for conventional arms under the scope of this Treaty. Such controls may require brokers to register or obtain written authorization before engaging in brokering transactions. (UNGA 2012)

The general brokering provisions of the draft text have been criticized by civil society groups as weak, with limited application. The text does not explicitly require states to control the brokering activities of their nationals and the suggested control measures are not obligatory. Existing multilateral instruments contain stronger and more detailed measures; for example, as already noted, the Wassenaar Arrangement Elements call for such specific regulations as national licensing of brokers, record-keeping of brokering data, and information sharing among states. Yet, in its intervention on the final day of the July 2012 Diplomatic Conference, Canada objected to the wording of Article 8 and called for alternative language that would weaken the draft text by removing all references to brokering beyond the article title:

Each State Party shall take the appropriate measures, within its domestic laws, to control activities which aid, abet or facilitate transfers prohibited by Article 3.

Since Article 3 of the draft text describes “Prohibited Transfers,” Canada’s proposed call eliminates any obligation for States Parties to regulate licit or legal brokering. Moreover, the phrasing

of Canada's alternative text suggests that it is not even intended to specifically address illicit brokering. It appears only to repeat Article 5.3 of the draft text, which states:

Each State Party shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures to implement the provisions of this Treaty.

Canada also declared that if the existing draft text were not altered to its satisfaction, it would consider invoking the "reservation" provision of the draft text (Article 19). This would allow Canada to formulate a reservation on the treaty that could effectively result in Canada's ignoring the brokering provisions. This notice may have set an unhelpful precedent, if other states use the reservation article to negotiate changes in the text. Clearly, if many states adopt Canada's approach to negotiations, the end result will be a weakened treaty.

Extraterritoriality

Why has Canada stepped up its opposition to brokering regulations? Some insight can be gleaned from a paper (Coffin 2000) prepared for Foreign Affairs Canada (DFAIT). The paper describes "three jurisdictional approaches found in existing brokering control regulations." The first involves regulation of brokering activities by residents of a state who facilitate arms transfers from that state to a second state. The second extends the first approach to include the regulation of residents who facilitate transfers from a second to a third state, even though the arms involved never enter the territory of the residency state. The third is called the "extra-territorial" approach and extends the second approach to include regulation of all citizens, wherever they reside and whatever the route of the brokered weapons. This third approach gives Canadian officials the most pause.

In its statement to the ATT Preparatory Committee meeting in July 2011, Canada called for clarification of the brokering provisions of the ATT, and tabled concerns over extraterritorial application:

The aspects that would need clarification would include:

- (1) The precise definition of the term 'brokering'; and
- (2) Whether or not brokers should be regulated in the same way as exports and, if so, should an ATT set out how this is done, or should it be left to national authorities to determine their own national regulatory process?

Canada also has concerns over the extraterritorial application of brokering measures.... Canada is very cautious about the extraterritorial application of national laws.

(Canada 2011)

Canada appears wary of all brokering obligations, especially any to maintain jurisdiction over the operations of Canadian brokers outside of Canada. Yet, as we have seen, a number of multilateral instruments to which Canada has agreed already encourage or require member states to extend brokering regulations extraterritorially to control broker activities of their citizens everywhere.

Extraterritorial application of regulations and enforcement are also required in related areas of Canadian law. Regulations to implement sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council, especially arms embargoes, routinely involve jurisdiction over Canadians outside Canada. The current United Nations Iraq Regulations (2004), invoked under Canada's United Nations Act, states:

No person in Canada and *no Canadian outside of Canada* shall knowingly export, sell, supply or send to any person in Iraq arms and related material unless they are required by the

Government of Iraq, or by a multinational force under unified command, to serve the purposes of Resolution 1546 of June 8, 2004. (Emphasis added.)

Similarly, the 1992 Special Economic Measures Act, which the Canadian government invokes to impose multilateral or unilateral sanctions against a foreign state, includes restrictions or prohibitions on “the exportation, sale, supply or shipment by any person in Canada or Canadian outside Canada of any goods wherever situated” (Article 4.2[b]).

As Canadian law already applies extraterritorially to implement and enforce arms embargoes and economic sanctions, it would not be a major regulatory leap for Canada to create parallel regulations to implement the brokering requirements of the ATT. Indeed, there will be many points of intersection between effective national implementation of UN arms embargoes and the ATT (see Epps 2010).

Other states serve as useful examples. South Africa established detailed arms brokering controls in 2002 (Lamb 2009). The United States has had brokering regulations in place since 1996 (Goodman & Stedjan 2011, p. 6). The regulations apply to all U.S. citizens wherever they reside as well as to all residents of the United States (Coflin 2000, p. 20). The United Kingdom recently tightened controls on “trafficking and brokering,” which it defines as “the involvement in deals which result in the movement of military goods from one third country to another.” The United Kingdom requires licences for individuals and companies involved in trafficking and brokering from the United Kingdom. The controls also apply to U.K. nationals who are trading in controlled military goods while outside the United Kingdom (U.K. Department of Business Innovation & Skills 2012).

Canadian broker regulations

Canada would not require significant alterations to existing national laws and regulations to meet the brokering obligations of multilateral agreements, including what is likely to result from the negotiations of an Arms Trade Treaty. Registration in Canada’s Controlled Goods Program is already mandatory for any person or business in a position to examine, possess, or transfer controlled goods in Canada. (Controlled goods include all Group 2 military goods except non-restricted and restricted firearms and small-calibre ammunition.) A reading of the existing regulations suggests the program already requires the registration of brokers of controlled goods that operate in Canada. It would be possible to extend registration to Canadian brokers operating outside Canada, especially in conjunction with Canadian implementation responsibilities related to UN arms embargoes and special economic measures.

Similarly, in Canada exports of Group 2 military goods are authorized by the Exports Control Bureau of DFAIT. The ECB issues export permits that would fulfill the requirement for written authorizations or licences for weapons transfers arranged by Canadian brokers. Brokers registered as operating from within Canada could apply for export permits in the same manner as domestic military manufacturers seeking to export military goods from Canada. Following Controlled Goods Program registration, brokers would be responsible for obtaining the end-use certificates, import authorizations, or other documentation required to demonstrate to Canadian authorities that the brokered arms transfer had received the necessary approval of the recipient state.

In the case of Canadian brokers registered as operating outside Canada, Canada could distinguish between two levels of regulatory requirements based on the national standards of the state in which the Canadian broker was operating. Where national brokering standards meet or exceed those of Canada, as with member states of the European Union, the broker could provide Canadian authorities with copies of export permits approved by the relevant authorities. In all other

cases, the broker would seek export permits from, and provide the necessary documentation to, Canadian authorities. The Canadian government would need to inform brokers of the regulatory status of their country of operation; a regularly updated website would serve this purpose.

Record-keeping and information-sharing related to brokering activities would follow from the licensing procedures, since export permit data is retained by Canadian authorities. This information could be made available to other states and through periodic public reporting.

Enforcement of brokering activities based in Canada is straightforward. The offences and penalties established for breaches of Canadian brokering regulations could follow existing standards for relevant breaches of the Criminal Code, the Defence Production Act, the Export and Import Permits Act, the Special Economic Measures, or the United Nations Act. When Canadian brokers commit offences outside Canada, enforcement by Canadian authorities would depend on the brokering and arms export controls in the residency state of the broker and any cooperative legal arrangements between Canada and the residency state, such as extradition agreements.

Recent U.S. efforts to arrest and arrange for the extradition of brokers who have violated U.S. law have proved difficult, especially in countries where there are no extradition agreements with the United States or where the violations are not illegal under local law (Goodman & Stedjan 2011, pp. 17-19). Canadian officials have grounds for concern about Canada's capacity to successfully prosecute Canadians operating as brokers in states with weak arms transfer laws and regulations. Consequently, the standard of these regulations would need to be a significant factor in the registration of foreign-based Canadian brokers.

Despite the challenges of extraterritorial enforcement, existing Canadian controls on the export of military goods should make it possible for Canada to meet its multilateral obligations to introduce and enforce the regulation of Canadian brokering activities inside and outside Canada. Strong provisions in the Arms Trade Treaty would assist Canada to fulfill its brokering obligations. A global framework of common standards for the national regulation of conventional weapons transfers would ease extraterritorial enforcement of Canadian brokering activity.

Perhaps more significantly, higher universal standards for transfer authorization could serve over time to diminish Canadian concerns about the extraterritorial regulation of Canadian arms brokers. As more states improve their export controls to meet ATT standards, there will be a corresponding decline in the number of states where unscrupulous Canadian brokers—or those of any other state—can take advantage of weak regulations. Similarly, as stricter offences and penalties are put in place to address breaches of improved transfer regulations, Canadian responsibility for prosecuting Canadian brokers operating outside the country should decline. Illicit brokering would be prosecuted by other states and illicit brokers could face penalties similar to those imposed under Canadian law.

Conclusion

For more than a decade the international community has recognized that the illicit trafficking of conventional weapons—notably small arms and light weapons—is facilitated by inadequate national regulation of arms brokers. Several multilateral instruments, including those to which Canada has agreed, require national regulation of licit arms brokering. Regulatory steps include registration of arms brokers, licensing of brokered arms transfers, record-keeping and reporting of relevant data, and suitable penalties for stipulated offences. The draft text of the global Arms Trade Treaty includes a brokering article that, although not as robust as some existing agreements, does codify brokering controls.

Opposing the brokering article in the draft treaty text moves Canada further from meeting its multilateral obligations to control arms brokering. Beyond demonstrating a short-sighted evasion of international responsibility, Canada's opposition to brokering controls could prolong the key weakness it has denounced: the application of extraterritoriality. Improved worldwide national standards to control arms brokering—and reduce illicit brokering—would enhance extraterritorial application of Canadian regulations in the short term and possibly remove its application in the longer term. Since Canadians operating abroad would be subject to higher international standards, the instances when Canada would need to intervene to uphold brokering regulations would decline.

Canada should rethink its opposition to Article 8 on brokering in the draft Arms Trade Treaty. During the final UN negotiations in March 2013 it should seek instead to fulfill its international commitments to regulate the activities of Canadian brokers, wherever they operate. Further, it should work to ensure that the brokering text in the ATT sets high national standards to control the activities of all arms brokers across the globe.

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Notes

1. The U.S. trial and sentencing of notorious arms broker Victor Bout during the Preparatory Committee period of the ATT process provided an opportunity for civil society groups to emphasize the need for brokering controls in the ATT. See, for example, Control Arms 2012.

2. The UN Coordinating Action in Small Arms (CASA) is compiling International Small Arms Control Standard (ISACS) modules in support of implementation of the UN Programme of Action on small arms. ISACS definitions (2012) include:

broker

a person or entity acting as an intermediary that brings together relevant parties and arranges or facilitates a potential transaction of small arms and light weapons in return for some form of benefit, whether financial or otherwise.

brokering

activities carried out by a broker in the context of arranging or facilitating an international transfer of small arms or light weapons.

NOTE 1 Brokering activities include, but are not limited to

- serving as a finder of business opportunities to one or more parties;
- putting relevant parties in contact;
- assisting parties in proposing, arranging or facilitating agreements or possible contracts between them;
- assisting parties in obtaining the necessary documentation; and
- assisting parties in arranging the necessary payments.

NOTE 2 Some activities closely associated with brokering in small arms and light weapons, that do not necessarily in themselves constitute brokering activities, might be undertaken by brokers as part of the process of putting a deal together to gain a benefit. These activities may include, for example, acting as dealers or agents in small arms and light weapons, providing for technical assistance, training, transport, freight forwarding, storage, finance, insurance, maintenance, security and other services.

NOTE 3 Brokering activities can take place in the broker's country of nationality, residence or registration; they can also take place in another country. The small arms and light weapons do not necessarily pass through the territory of the country where the brokering activity takes place, nor does the broker necessarily take ownership of the small arms and light weapons.

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Project Ploughshares gratefully acknowledges the financial support of individuals, national churches, congregations, religious orders, foundations, and organizations across Canada. We are particularly grateful to The Simons Foundation in Vancouver for its generous support.