



State Crime and Arms
Trafficking: The United States
and the Merchants of Death

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Overview

- This research focuses on the international market for weapons and the illicit provision of arms to meet that market demand.
- We will focus on the known sources of illicit arms; the types of arms most commonly trafficked in the illicit market, the activities of three major arms traffickers, and the role of the U.S. state in facilitating the illegal trafficking of arms.



The Illicit Market in Arms

- Arms trafficking is multifaceted and involves a host of participants including transnational crime networks, states, and corporations. It is a complex web of sellers, brokers, intermediaries, financiers, and shipping companies.
- It involves a continuum from the grey market to the black market.
- Many state institutions play a prominent role in the facilitation of, complicity in, and implicit involvement in black and grey arms trafficking.

The Illicit Market in Arms

- Considering the vast number of actors involved in arms trafficking, control is highly problematic.
- Furthermore, there are broader political issues that hinder efforts of control as highlighted by the state crime literature, including issues of enforcement, political will and states' positions to hinder the advancement of levels of accountability for their own behaviors.
- If the goal of crime policy is to reduce illegal arms trafficking policies and controls must be based, not only on the immediate or apparent actors, but also the role of states in the facilitation of this type of crime.

The Source of Illicit Arms

- Unfortunately we know very little about the source of weapons trafficked in the illicit market.
- In the United States the Tiahrt Amendment (named for Kansas Representative Todd Tiahrt) bans the public release of comprehensive information about guns traced to crime scenes contained in ATF's firearms tracing system database.
- However, a review of ATF initiated federal prosecutions provides enough data to identify the most common sources of illicitly trafficked weapons emanating in the United States:

Type of Trafficking	Percent of Weapons
Trafficking by a licensed dealer	31%
Trafficking through gun shows	21%
Trafficking through straw purchasers	20%
Trafficking by unlicensed sellers	18%
Trafficking stolen firearms	10%

In addition, joint reports by ATF and Mexican law enforcement on weapons sold to Mexican drug cartels show the following distribution of trafficked weapons:

Type of Weapon	Percent of All Weapons Sold to Mexican Cartels
Assault Weapons	42%
Semi-automatic pistols	30%
Armor piercing handguns	18%
50 caliber sniper rifles	2%
Other	8%

Mexican Cartels (continued)

- According to ATF 90% of the weapons obtained by the Mexican cartels emanate in the U.S. There are 6,700 gun dealers along the border with Mexico.
- It is clear that U.S. law constitutes implicit support for arms trafficking to Mexico



The Death Merchants and the U.S. Government

- Implicit U.S. facilitation of arms trafficking is obvious.
- Complicit U.S. facilitation of trafficking is hidden under the cloak of “national security.”
- But a close examination of the three largest arms traffickers in the world provides some important clues to what is actually hidden by the term “national security.”

SARKIS SOGHANALIAN



SARKIS SOGHANALIAN

- 1929-2011
- Armenian descent
- Lebanese citizen
- Residence: Los Angeles
- Clients: Saddam Hussein (Iraq), Anastasio Somoza and the Contras (Nicaragua), Christian Fallange Militias (Lebanon), General Leopoldo Galiteri (Argentina), Ferdinand Marcos (Philippines), Mobuto Sese Seko (Congo), Muammar Qaddafi (Libya).

SARKIS SOGHANALIAN

- U.S. Government Collaborations: CIA, FBI, DIA, Jack Brennan (Nixon's chief-of-staff), John Mitchell (Attorney General).
- Largest Arms Deals: Sold 103 combat helicopters and two rocket launchers to Iraq. Air-dropped 10,000 Kalasnikov rifles to FARC (Colombia).

SARKIS SOGHANALIAN

- U.S. Criminal Record: Convicted on 6 counts of exporting arms without the required federal license. Sentenced to 6 years. Sentence set aside at the request of the Justice Department
- Convicted of wire fraud, sentenced to 10 months. Sentence set aside at the request of the US. Attorney because of “substantial assistance to law enforcement” in an unspecified investigation.
- Prosecution for the FARC air-drop was suspended at the request of the CIA.

JEAN-BERNARD LASNAUD



JEAN-BERNARD LASNAUD

- 1942-
- French
- Residence: Ft. Lauderdale (currently traveling abroad)
- Largest Arms Deals: Sale of 6,500 tons of weapons to Croatia and Ecuador.

JEAN-BERNARD LASNAUD

- U.S. Criminal Record: Florida law enforcement officials believe Lasnaud is a protected asset of the CIA.
- U.S. Dept. of Justice has refused to arrest Lasnaud on an Interpol arrest warrant.
- Convicted in Belgium for illegal arms trafficking. The U.S. refused to extradite him.

MONZAR AL KASSAR



MONZAR AL KASSAR

- 1945-
- Syrian
- Residence: Marabella, Spain
- Clients: Argentina, Austria, Bosnia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chad, Croatia, Guatemala, Iran, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Panama, Poland, S. Africa, Sri Lanka, Syria, United States, and Yemen.

MONZAR AL KASSAR

- Largest Arms Deals: Sold anti-ship cruise missile technology to Iran.
- Sold \$1.11 billion in submarines to Argentina
- Major player in Iran-Contra, worked directly with Oliver North and General Richard Secord.
- Arms broker for the International Bank for Credit and Commerce (BCCI).

Conclusion

- The questions that still need to be explored are: Why did the U.S. government prevent the arrest and prosecution of the three largest arms traffickers in the world?
- Why does the U.S. government find it useful to cover-up the illegal trafficking in arms which are destined for ostensible enemies like Iraq, Iran, Libya and FARC?
- How extensive is U.S. government collaboration in illegal arms sales to putative allies like the Flange militia, the Contras, and Mobuto?