

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: POL 30/051/2006 (Public)
News Service No: 265
16 October 2006

Embargo Date: 16 October 2006 13:00 GMT

Bullets from Greece, China, Russia and United States found in rebel hands in Democratic Republic of Congo

**Russia, China and US are among key skeptics on Arms Trade Treaty
Research is just one example of how the uncontrolled arms trade fuels serious human rights abuses**

New research by the Control Arms Campaign: Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)

Bullets manufactured in Greece, China, Russia and the USA have been found in the hands of rebel groups in the Ituri District of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is under a UN arms embargo. The research from the Control Arms Campaign underscores the urgent need for an Arms Trade Treaty to stem the flood of arms into conflict zones and is released today, a week before an expected vote at the United Nations on a resolution to start work on the Treaty.

This is believed to be the first time that US and Greek bullets have been recovered from rebel groups in eastern DRC, highlighting the global sources of the arms fuelling fighting in the region. Conducted in September 2006, the research reveals the origins of a sample of arms and ammunition recovered from rebel groups since the imposition of the UN arms embargo in 2003. Small arms made in Russia, China, Serbia and South Africa were also found.

The Campaign believes it is very unlikely that these weapons and bullets were sold directly to rebels in the DRC, which would be a breach of the UN arms embargo. It is more likely that they entered the Ituri District from neighbouring countries, illustrating the need for an Arms Trade Treaty to establish global standards for arms sales based on international law.

“This is just one example of how lax arms controls fuel conflict and suffering worldwide. UN arms embargoes are like dams against tidal waves; alone they can’t stop weapons flooding in. Only a tough global Arms Trade Treaty could stem the flow of arms to the world’s war zones,” said Jeremy Hobbs, Director of Oxfam International.

A resolution to start work on an Arms Trade Treaty was tabled by seven governments last week at the UN. It was co-sponsored by 77 other governments, with more expected to follow this week. The resolution is likely to be put to a vote in the UN General Assembly’s First Committee early next week. The Control Arms Campaign, backed by 20 Nobel Peace Laureates, is calling for an Arms Trade Treaty to ban the international transfer of weapons and other military equipment when there is a clear risk that these will be

used to commit gross human rights violations, to fuel conflict or to undermine development.

“Rebel groups in the Eastern DRC have an appalling track record of rape, torture and killing of civilians as well as a history of using children as soldiers. That bullets from so many countries have fuelled these abuses is yet another indication that an Arms Trade Treaty must become a reality,” said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

An estimated 3.9 million people have been killed as a result of conflict in the DRC since 1998. Fighting continues in eastern DRC despite a peace deal in 2002, fuelled by weapons and ammunition from around the world. Exactly how the arms identified by researchers found their way to rebels in the Ituri District is not known, but they included:

Sniper rifle bullets manufactured by the Federal Cartridge Company in the USA.
Rifle bullets manufactured by the Pyrkal Greek Powder & Cartridge Company in the late 1980s.
An R4 assault rifle manufactured in South Africa.
Chinese assault rifles, and a Serbian pistol, which were all damaged, suggesting that they had been buried or stored in wet conditions. 50 to 60 per cent of weapons used in the DRC are believed to be AK-47s.

“With 1000 people dying every day from gun violence, governments can no longer ignore this horror story that repeats itself from Congo to Colombia to Iraq. It is time for an Arms Trade Treaty to stop these weapons from falling into the wrong hands,” said Charles Nasibu, Congolese small arms researcher, activist and member of IANSA.

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Notes to editors:

In September 2006, Control Arms researchers visited compounds in Bunia (in the Ituri District of eastern DRC) to obtain photographic evidence of munitions and weapons recovered from rebel forces since the imposition of the UN arms embargo in July 2003. This followed a previous field mission to Ituri in November 2005 to help identify weapon sources. Armed groups in the Ituri District and neighbouring Kivu Provinces have been subject to various arms embargoes, including by the EU (imposed in April 1993) and the UN since July 2003.

The serial numbers and relevant markings, including head-stamps on ammunition cartridges and markings on rifles, have been identified by international munitions experts and reveal small arms and ammunition manufactured by China, Greece, Russia, South Africa, Serbia and the US

For media briefing of the research see

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGPOL300502006>

Public Document

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