



UN adopts pact to regulate multibillion-dollar global arms trade

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The U.N. General Assembly has overwhelmingly approved the first U.N. treaty regulating the multibillion-dollar international arms trade.

The resolution adopting the landmark treaty was approved by a vote of 154 to 3 with 23 abstentions.

The 193-member world body voted after Iran, North Korea and Syria blocked its adoption by consensus at a negotiating conference last Thursday. The three countries voted "no" on the resolution.

The National Rifle Association has portrayed the draft treaty as a threat to gun ownership rights enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and has lobbied to defeat the proposal at the U.N. The NRA last week praised the Senate's passage of an amendment to the Democratic budget proposal that would prevent the U.S. from entering into the treaty.

The Obama administration, however, formally supported the U.N. treaty-- despite the warnings from Senate lawmakers that they would not ratify it.

"The Senate has already gone on record in stating that an Arms Trade Treaty has no hope, especially if it does not specifically protect the individual right to bear arms and American sovereignty," Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., who backed the amendment, said, The Washington Times reported. "It would be pointless for the president to sign such a treaty and expect the Senate to go along. We won't ratify it."

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry praised the treaty in a statement Tuesday, and said the terms only apply to international trade and does not infringe on the right of any state to regulate arms within its territory.

[summary]

"As the United States has required from the outset of these negotiations, nothing in this treaty could ever infringe on the rights of American citizens under our domestic law or the Constitution, including the Second Amendment," the statement said.

Greg Abbott, the Texas attorney general, urged Obama not to sign the treaty. He said it could "draw law-abiding gun owners and gun store operators into a complex web of bureaucratic red tape created by a new department at the UN devoted to overseeing the treaty."

Abbot writes, "when the Constitution says, 'the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed,' it means no one—including the UN—can infringe that right."

The vote capped a more than decade-long campaign by activists and some governments to regulate the \$60 billion global arms trade and try to keep illicit weapons out of the hands of terrorists, insurgent fighters and organized crime.

It will not control the domestic use of weapons in any country, but it will require countries to establish national regulations to control arms transfers.

It covers battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large-caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers, and small arms and light weapons. A phrase stating that this list was "at a minimum" was dropped, according to diplomats, at the insistence of the U.S.

Supporters complained that this limited the treaty's scope.

Hopes of reaching agreement on what would be a landmark treaty were dashed last July when the U.S. said it needed more time to consider the proposed accord — a move quickly backed by Russia and China.

In December, the U.N. General Assembly decided to hold a final conference and set Thursday as the deadline for reaching agreement.

For more than a decade, activists and some governments have been pushing for international rules to try to keep illicit weapons out of the hands of terrorists, insurgent fighters and organized crime.

"It's important for each and every country in the world that we have a regulation of the international arms trade," Germany's U.N. Ambassador Peter Wittig told the AP. "There are still some divergencies of views, but I trust we can overcome them."

The Associated Press contributed to this report

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