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OP/ED | 7/10/2012 @ 12:45PM | 115,385 views

The U.N. Arms Trade Treaty: Are Our 2nd Amendment Rights Part Of The Deal?

One year ago I wrote an article titled "[U.N. Agreement Should Have All Gun Owners Up In Arms](#)" which has recently gained a great deal of renewed public interest. This update reviews some more recent developments, offering additional perspective about an immediate matter which should be of great concern to all who value rights guaranteed by our Second Amendment.

The Obama administration is actively engaged in negotiations to finalize details for a new global agreement premised to fight "terrorism", "insurgency" and "international crime syndicates". As U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon describes its purpose, "Our goal is clear: a robust and legally binding Arms Trade Treaty that will have a real impact on the lives of those millions of people suffering from consequences of armed conflict, repression and armed violence...It is ambitious, but it is achievable."



US President Barack Obama addresses the United Nations General Assembly. "As a former lecturer in constitutional law, wouldn't President Obama realize that the U.N.'s gun- grab agenda violates our sovereign rights? Perhaps the answer to that question warrants some serious reflection." (Image credit: AFP/Getty Images via @daylife)

Under the George W. Bush administration, the U.S. originally voted against a resolution that began the process in 2006. However, the current administration reversed that policy, and strongly supports its enactment. In January 2010, U.S. representatives joined with those of 152 other countries in endorsing a U.N. Arms Treaty [Resolution](#) to draft a blueprint for enactment in 2012. This activity is planned to be completed by July 27, and Secretary of State [Hillary Clinton](#) has pledged to push hard for Senate ratification. Previously led by the United Kingdom, there can be no doubt that the U.N.'s 193-member General Assembly will approve it.

Foreign ministers of the U.K., France, Germany and Sweden want the treaty to cover all types of conventional weapons, notably including small arms and light weapons, all types of munitions, and related technologies. They also

advocate that it include strong provisions governing human rights, international humanitarian law and sustainable development. (More about sustainable development later.)

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Internal [Security](#) and Nonproliferation, Thomas Countryman, has stated that the Obama administration does not support regulation of ammunition, but only wants to make it more difficult to “conduct illicit, illegal and destabilizing transfers of arms”. In addition, a press release issued by the U.N. Office for Disarmament Affairs says that “The outcome will not seek to prohibit citizens of any country from possessing firearms or to interfere with the legal trade in small arms and light weapons.”

Such statements have many very strong skeptics, both inside and outside Congress. One reason, among many, is that Iran, a country that is one of the world’s worst human rights violators, yet often chaired the U.N. [Human Rights](#) Council...yes Iran, arms supplier to many of America’s most determined adversaries... was selected for a top Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) planning conference position. The members, apparently including U.S. representatives, authorized this selection shortly after the same U.N. found the very same Iran guilty of transferring guns and bombs to the Syrian regime of Bashar Assad who is presently slaughtering thousands of its own citizens. Meanwhile, the U.N., America included, purporting to be distraught about illicit, illegal and destabilizing transfers of arms, watches in the wings as these tragedies unfold. Of course, they’re very busy. Those arms control planning conferences require a lot of attention.

On June 29, 130 Republican House members sent a letter to President Obama and Secretary Clinton arguing that the proposed treaty infringes on the “fundamental, individual right to keep and bear arms”. The letter charges that “...the U.N.’s actions to date indicate that the ATT is likely to pose significant threats to our national security, foreign policy, and economic interests as well as our constitutional rights.” The lawmakers adamantly insist that the U.S. Government has no right to support a treaty that violates the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Democrats have accused Republicans of making this a political issue, maintaining that the treaty poses no Second Amendment threat. Others, such as former U.N. ambassador John Bolton, caution gun owners to take this initiative seriously. He believes that the U.N. “is trying to act as though this is really just a treaty about international arms trade between nation states, but there is no doubt that the real agenda here is domestic firearms control.”

So let’s review some recent history and see if gun owners and other Second Amendment defenders might have very good reasons to take issue with this treaty. Actually, we don’t have to look back very far at all.

Consider the Fast and Furious debacle, an operation that was represented to be all about targeting bad guys who are committing violent crimes on both sides of our border with Mexico. There can be no remaining doubt that the program was really aimed at border gun shops and their right to conduct legal civilian firearms sales.

And after the 2010 Republican House cleaning dashed President Obama’s dream of a carbon cap-and-trade program, he wasted no time finding a way to circumvent that pesky obstacle. His EPA is gleefully pursuing that same anti-fossil energy agenda. Meanwhile, Congress sits idly by and allows this

breach of its constitutional responsibility established by separation of powers to continue.

Then there's the currently proposed, Obama-endorsed, [Law](#) of the Sea Treaty (LOST) which would subordinate U.S. naval and drilling operations beyond 200 miles of our coast to a newly established U.N. bureaucracy. If ratified by Congress, it will grant a Kingston, Jamaica-based International Seabed Authority (ISA) the power to regulate deep-sea oil exploration, seabed mining, and fishing rights. As part of the deal, as much as 7% of U.S. government revenue collected from oil and gas companies operating off our coast will be forked over to ISA for redistribution to poorer, landlocked countries.

The U.S. would have one vote out of 160 regarding where the money would go, and be obligated to hand over offshore drilling technology to any nation that wants it... for free. And who are those lucky international recipients? They will most likely include such undemocratic, despotic and brutal governments as Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, Sudan and Zimbabwe...all current voting members of LOST.

Both President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush supported the treaty during their tenures, yet they never sent it to the Senate for ratification because of opposition over concerns that it will limit commerce and allow international bodies to wield control over U.S. interests. During W's term of office, then-Senator Joe Biden introduced LOST before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he chaired in 2007, yet it was never brought to the floor for a vote.

Steven Groves, an international law fellow at the Heritage Foundation, believes that opposition from Republican members of Congress who have objected to LOST reflects a legitimate deep-seated distrust of the United Nations and other international bodies, observing: "This seems to me a bit of a Trojan Horse for the ability of one country to affect another country's environmental policy. That's generally something we do not like as conservatives and Americans."

Given good prospects that the White House and Senate may have fewer Democrat residents after November, Senator Kerry and other proponents have been working hard to speed up the approval process before moving vans arrive.

But, like LOST, the Arms Trade Treaty can't be enacted unless Congress ratifies it. Right? And, of course, they would never approve any global agreement that will infringe upon our constitutional Second Amendment protections. Right? Well, let's assume for argument's sake that they won't. But now consider another possibility, something called a "soft law".

Remember that sustainable development agenda mentioned earlier that the European foreign ministers want to incorporate into the treaty provisions? Originally intended to be implemented in connection with a U.N. treaty, an "Agenda 21" plan was enacted as a soft law in 1993 creating a nongovernmental organization, the "International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives" (ICLEI), by Executive Order after the Clinton administration was unsuccessful in getting Congress to ratify the program. They wouldn't approve the treaty because it would transfer massive regulatory control over broad aspects of U.S. energy production and consumption. In 2003 the NGO's name was changed to "ICLEI- Local

Governments for Sustainability” to emphasize “local” and diminish concerns about “international” influence and associations with U.N. political and financial ties. ICLEI’s are now active in most of our counties On its web page, “ICLEI: Connecting Leaders”, the organization explains that their networking strategy connects cities and local governments to the United Nations and other international bodies.

Agenda 21 envisions a global scheme for healthcare, education, nutrition, agriculture, labor, production, and consumption. A summary version titled AGENDA 21: The Earth Summit Strategy to Save Our Planet (Earthpress, 1993), calls for “...a profound reorientation of all human society, unlike anything the world has ever experienced—a major shift in the priorities of both governments and individuals and an unprecedented redeployment of human and financial resources.” The report emphasizes that “This shift will demand a concern for the environmental consequences of every human action be integrated into individual and collective decision-making at every level.”

ICLEI’s web page states that its Local Agenda 21 [LA21] Model Communities Programme is “designed to aid local governments in implementing Chapter 28 of Agenda 21, the global action plan for sustainable development.” As Gary Lawrence, a planner for the city of Seattle and an advisor to the Clinton-Gore administration’s Council on Sustainable Development and to U.S. AID commented at a 1998 U.N. Environmental Development Forum in London titled “The Future of Local Agenda 21 in the New Millennium”, “In some cases, LA21 is seen as an attack on the power of the nation-state.” He went on to say, “Participating in a U.N. advocated planning process will very likely bring out many...who would work to defeat any elected official...undertaking Local Agenda 21 ...So we will call our process something else, such as comprehensive planning, growth management or smart growth.”

And so they have. “Comprehensive planning”, “growth management” and “smart growth” (which is Agenda 21 with a new name). All mean pretty much the same thing... centralized control over virtually every aspect of urban life: energy and water use, housing stock and allocation, population levels, public health and dietary regimens, resources and recycling, “social justice” and education.

So this time the U.N.-sponsored ATT initiative, whether enacted by Congress or through a soft law Executive Order, can be expected to receive an appealing identity as well. Most likely it will purport to protect us from “terrorism”, “insurgency” and/or “international crime syndicates”. Perhaps, without saying so, it will be pitched to protect us even from ourselves.

Don’t forget that an Illinois senator named Barack Obama was an aggressive advocate for expanding gun control laws, and even voted against legislation giving gun owners an affirmative defense when they use firearms to defend themselves and their families against home invaders and burglars. That was after he served on a 10-member board of directors of the radically activist anti-gun Joyce Foundation in Chicago which contributed large grants to anti-Second Amendment organizations.

But then, as a former lecturer in constitutional law, wouldn’t he certainly realize that the U.N.’s gun- grab agenda violates our sovereign rights? Perhaps the answer to that question warrants some serious reflection!

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<http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2012/07/10/the-u-n-arms-trade-treaty-are-our-2nd-amendment-rights-part-of-the-deal/>