

# United Nations Arms Embargoes

## Their Impact on Arms Flows and Target Behaviour

### **A report by**

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# Preface

Arms embargoes have frequently been employed by the United Nations Security Council to carry out its primary responsibility under the UN Charter—to maintain international peace and security. However, the embargoes that have been introduced since 1990 have been assessed as having a limited impact on both arms flows to and the behaviour of embargoed targets. The Swiss, German and Swedish governments, respectively, launched the Interlaken (1999–2001), Bonn–Berlin (2000–2001) and Stockholm (2001–2003) processes to improve the targeting and implementation of UN sanctions, including arms embargoes. The present report is, to our knowledge, the first comprehensive assessment of UN arms embargoes implemented since the innovations deriving from these processes were introduced.

The Arms Transfers Project of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Special Program on the Implementation of Targeted Sanctions (SPITS) at Uppsala University's Department of Peace and Conflict Research have pooled their expertise to provide a unique study of the changes in arms flows and target behaviour in 21 cases when UN arms embargoes were threatened, 27 mandatory UN arms embargoes and 11 post-embargo cases in the 17-year period 1990–2006. In an effort to further improve the effectiveness of the targeting of UN arms embargoes, this report offers a typology to be considered when designing and assessing UN arms embargoes. The typology distinguishes between the different international peace and security end goals of: (a) countering threats against *Global Security*; (b) strengthening legitimate *Government Authority*; and (c) achieving the peaceful political settlement of a violent armed conflict through *Conflict Management*. The results indicate that embargoes have different impacts on arms flows and target behaviour in these three types of situation. In reaching these conclusions, the researchers have also looked carefully at alternative explanations. The study puts forward a number of recommendations for the further improvement of UN arms embargo implementation. The primary intended audience for this report is the UN Security Council, but its potential readership is much broader, encompassing all the UN member states, UN agencies, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, researchers and the concerned general public.

This report is the result of six months' research carried out by members of the SIPRI Arms Transfers Project and SPITS in 2007. The SPITS research team used the Uppsala Conflict Databases in their quantitative survey of target behaviour in periods of threatened and implemented arms embargoes and in post-embargo periods. A detailed discussion of the methodology employed to undertake this task is presented in a research paper entitled 'UN arms embargoes and target behaviour, 1990–2006', written by Daniel Strandow and available at <<http://www.smart-sanctions.se>>. The SIPRI Arms Transfers Project studied the impact on arms flows in these three situations and produced 11 background case studies of 17 UN arms

embargoes that discuss the impact of UN monitoring and implementation mechanisms on arms flows to embargoed targets. These case studies are available on SIPRI's website at <[http://books.sipri.org/product\\_info?c\\_product\\_id=356](http://books.sipri.org/product_info?c_product_id=356)>.

The SIPRI and SPITS research teams would like to thank the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs for its generous financial support for this collaborate project. The authors are grateful for the comments received from reviewers at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Alex Vines), SIPRI (Ian Anthony, Sibylle Bauer, Mark Bromley and Pieter D. Wezeman), SPITS (Mikael Eriksson), the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Joakim Kreutz) and the UN Sanctions Branch (Ulrik Ahnfeldt-Mollerup, David Briggs, Loraine Rickard-Martin, Tilo Stolz and James Sutterlin). The authors wish to make special mention of the invaluable advice and support provided by the SIPRI editorial team, in particular Connie Wall; the SIPRI Library, under Nenne Bodell; and Åsa Blomström, SIPRI Arms Transfers Project Research Assistant.

The authors take full and sole responsibility for the analysis and recommendations of the report.

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# Foreword

In the interest of maintaining international peace and security, the United Nations Security Council can use sanctions, an international response that is stronger than a diplomatic note but falls short of a declaration of war. The mandate for use of this instrument has been in the UN Charter since 1945, but the use of sanctions has increased dramatically since the end of the cold war.

The unintended consequences of sanctions, in particular those against Iraq in the 1990s, caused the international community to take a serious look at how they could be made more effective. The goal is to influence decision makers in the targeted country but also to avoid negative humanitarian effects. The key words are ‘targeted’ and ‘smart’ sanctions. The international community cooperates to achieve this with regard to financial sanctions, travel bans, arms embargoes and aviation-related sanctions.

Sweden takes a keen interest in improving all aspects of the sanctions regime, including the need to ensure respect for human rights and while making sanctions more effective. The focus of this study is UN arms embargoes. This is one of the most frequently used forms of sanction, yet it has been the topic of precious little academic analysis. This study, the first of its kind, takes a closer look at all the 27 arms embargoes adopted by the UN Security Council. It asks two important questions. How is the flow of weapons affected by an arms embargo? Does an arms embargo affect the behaviour of the targeted actors? The study goes on to suggest improvements that could be made in order for arms embargoes to have a more tangible effect.

The study was carried out jointly by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the Special Program on the Implementation of Targeted Sanctions of the Department for Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, combining the expertise on arms transfers at SIPRI with the research programme on sanctions at Uppsala University. The views and recommendations in the study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect Swedish Government policy. It is my hope that the study will be of value to the UN member states and the UN Secretariat in their efforts to enhance the effectiveness of UN arms embargoes.

Frank Belfrage  
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

Stockholm, 2007

# Executive summary

This report assesses the effectiveness of United Nations arms embargoes as a means for reaching desired end goals. The results are based on quantitative and qualitative data that were collected on the 27 mandatory UN arms embargoes imposed in the period 1990–2006 (see table A.1 for a list of all the mandatory and voluntary UN arms embargoes in this period). The UN has a range of sanctions at its disposal with which to coerce states and non-governmental actors to improve their behaviour in the interests of international peace and security. Arms embargoes have become one of the preferred forms of sanction since the end of the cold war. The embargoes have varied in terms of their demands, coverage, scope, implementation, effects and how they were ended.

The rationale for this report stems from two points. First, the effectiveness of the means (measures to halt arms flows) and the end goals (positive changes in target behaviour) of UN arms embargoes should be assessed separately, by addressing two specific research questions.

- Do UN arms embargoes limit the flow of arms to embargoed targets?
- Do UN arms embargoes compel targets to improve their behaviour in line with UN Security Council (UNSC) demands and end goals?

A number of factors were taken into account in the assessment of the impact of UN arms embargoes on arms flows: (a) the target's existing arms and ammunition stocks; (b) domestic arms-production capabilities; (c) access to the grey and black arms markets; (d) other sanctions that affect the target's ability to fund or arrange for arms acquisitions; and (e) the target's actual demand for conventional arms. When analysing results for the impact of UN arms embargoes on target behaviour, the influence of six other factors was also considered: (a) the duration of the crisis to be resolved; (b) the imposition of other UN sanctions; (c) the presence of UN peacekeepers; (d) changes in the target's leadership; (e) the duration of the arms embargo; and (f) victory in an armed conflict.

Second, analyses of UN arms embargoes need to consider whether the embargoes achieve their end goals. This report puts forward an embargo typology that categorizes the stated demands and end goals of the 27 UNSC resolutions that established (or significantly modified) a mandatory UN arms embargo. The goal is to assist efforts to tailor sanctions to better effect and assess the impact of UN arms embargoes on meeting stated demands and end goals. Three categories of end goal to be achieved through UN arms embargoes were developed: (a) addressing threats against *Global Security* (6 cases); (b) strengthening legitimate *Government Authority* (5 cases); and (c) achieving the peaceful political settlement of a violent armed conflict through *Conflict Management* (16 cases).

### **Assessing the impact of the threat of a UN arms embargo**

A publicly stated threat of a UN arms embargo is defined here as a UNSC resolution that has been passed or a statement made to the media by one of the permanent five (P5) members of the UNSC (China, France, Russia, the UK and the USA) that threatens the imposition of a UN arms embargo. This approach identifies 21 cases of threatened UN arms embargoes in the period 1990–2006. The credibility of these public threats is assessed using two empirically observable measures: (a) arms supplies by P5 states to the target in the threat period; and (b) P5 public opposition to a UN arms embargo against the target. If either factor was found, the credibility of the threat was deemed low.

In 9 of the 21 cases of a threatened arms embargo, at least one P5 state provided military support to a target after the threat had been made. In 7 of the 21 cases at least one P5 member publicly expressed its opposition to the imposition of a UN arms embargo on a target. Only 5 threats of the imposition of a UN arms embargo were assessed as credible.

Three factors made it difficult to test the hypothesis that there would be a significant increase in the arms flow to a target in the period between the threat of a UN arms embargo and its imposition. First, in the Government Authority and Conflict Management categories, public threats were usually quickly followed by the actual imposition of a UN arms embargo, leaving little time for targets to acquire arms. Second, very little data was publicly available on transfers to non-governmental armed forces, especially concerning small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition. Third, it was not possible to account for cases in which a potential target was alerted to the prospect of a UN arms embargo before a public threat had been made. Only in the cases of the embargoes on Eritrea and Ethiopia and on Sudan were significant increases in deliveries of major conventional arms recorded for the threat period. However, these weapon deliveries were scheduled in contracts that were agreed before any public threat of a UN arms embargo had been made.

In two cases a threat was assessed as successful because the target significantly improved its short-term behaviour and a UN arms embargo was not imposed: the threats regarding North Korea (1993) and Eritrea and Ethiopia (2005). The assessment of the cases that were examined for this report showed that both public threats to impose a UN arms embargo and voluntary UN arms embargoes rarely result in the improvement of a target's behaviour. Of the 21 cases of a threatened UN arms embargo, 16 resulted in the imposition of a mandatory UN arms embargo on the target within a year of a threat being issued.

### **Assessing the implementation of a UN arms embargo**

The importance of separating the embargoes in the Global Security category from those in the Government Authority and Conflict Management categories for the purposes of studying the effectiveness of UN arms embargoes on arms flows was

demonstrated by the fact that targeted actors in the Global Security embargo category are not as interested in acquiring ammunition, SALW, artillery, armoured vehicles and aircraft as those—both states and non-governmental armed forces—in the Conflict Management and Government Authority categories (with the possible exceptions of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and the Taliban). However, evidence suggests that targets of embargoes in the Global Security category, such as Libya, have violated other UN arms embargoes by supplying arms to other embargoed targets.

In all the cases in which an embargoed target had access to arms within the region or country in which it was based—from domestic production, from weapon stockpiles or from peacekeepers present there—the need to import arms in violation of a UN arms embargo was lessened. The embargoed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) had domestic arms production capabilities and stockpiles of weapons that satisfied its own demands and also allowed it to supply weapons to other embargoed targets. In this case, not only did the UN arms embargo have a limited impact on the embargoed target's arms acquisitions but the target was also shown to be willing and able to transfer its own surplus arms and ammunition to other embargoed targets.

In the Conflict Management and Government Authority embargo categories, SALW and ammunition appear to have been the main military items that were transferred in violation of UN arms embargoes, often from surplus stockpiles in Europe via arms brokers and corrupt state officials using forged or manipulated documentation. While reported seizures of SALW and ammunition appear to correlate with improved short-term target behaviour in some embargoes on entities in West Africa, armed hostilities resumed following resupply.

Target behaviour in relation to the demands and end goals of resolutions was assessed using data from annual observations of different sets of indicators for each type of case: political statements and actions for embargoes in the Global Security category; political statements and the level of violence against civilians for Government Authority embargoes; and the implementation of peace agreements and the level of battle-related violence for Conflict Management embargoes. On the basis of these indicators, there appears to be a correlation between the imposition of a UN arms embargo and improved target behaviour in only a quarter of the annual observations made for the 27 mandatory UN arms embargoes studied. More than a third of the observations suggested that there is a correlation between positive behavioural change in targets and high levels of border-crossing restraint.

Of the 12 cases of sudden or forceful leadership change, there appears to be a strong correlation in 7 of the Conflict Management embargoes between change in leadership and improvement of target behaviour. UN peacekeepers were present in 17 of the 27 cases studied, and their presence appears to have had a positive impact on target behaviour in many of these cases. UN monitoring and enforcement mechanisms seem to have a greater impact in cases in which UN peacekeepers have a mandate to monitor and enforce a UN arms embargo.

The capacity and political will of five sets of actors are crucial for assessing the challenges to implementing effective UN arms embargoes: the P5 states, arms-supplying states, arms transit and transshipment states, states neighbouring embargoed targets and embargoed targets. Although all UN member states are obliged to implement and monitor mandatory UN arms embargoes, it is particularly important that there is political will and an interest in doing so on the part of the P5 states and states neighbouring embargoed targets. In a number of cases, states neighbouring targets of embargoes in the Conflict Management and Government Authority categories in Africa and the Middle East are considered to have ignored their commitments to a UN arms embargo when this conflicted with their regional interests. UNSC Resolution 1343 (2001), which imposed a UN arms embargo and other sanctions on Liberia for supplying arms to embargoed targets in Sierra Leone, establishes a precedent for the UNSC to sanction a state that violates a UN arms embargo and assists in the prolongation of conflict in a neighbouring state.

### **Assessing the impact of ending a UN arms embargo**

By the end of 2006, 11 of the 27 UN arms embargoes considered in the report had ended: 8 were open-ended embargoes, 2 were regularly reviewed embargoes and 1 was a time-limited embargo. Six of these UN arms embargoes ended conclusively, while five were followed by a new UN arms embargo that differed in terms of its coverage, demands or end goals.

In the cases of the embargoes on Angola, Haiti, the FRY and Libya, no significant transfers of arms were recorded for the period from immediately after the embargo to the end of 2006. Domestic access to arms in the FRY arguably limited the need for imports in this case. Russia resumed deliveries of combat aircraft to Eritrea in 2001 and to Ethiopia in 2003. Of the 5 other cases, the ending of blanket arms embargoes on Iraq (1990–2004), Rwanda (1994–55) and Sierra Leone (1997–98) enabled the government forces in these states to equip themselves to fight embargoed non-governmental armed forces and insurgents. The UN arms embargo on Liberia that was imposed in 2003 was partially lifted in 2006, with limited arms imports for the government's forces for purposes of security sector reform.

Improvements in target behaviour in the period immediately preceding and after the ending of a UN arms embargo were observed in five of the six conclusively ended cases: Angola, Haiti, Libya, the former Yugoslavia and the FRY. There appears to be a positive correlation between improved target behaviour in the short term and the ending of a UN arms embargo in these cases. The exception to this rule is the time-limited UN arms embargo on Eritrea and Ethiopia: the ending of the embargo on these two targets was premature, as target behaviour is still a concern. There is no observable improved target behaviour in the cases in which new UN arms embargoes changed the coverage or demands on embargoed targets in Iraq, Rwanda or Sierra Leone. Target behaviour did not improve in Liberia following the lifting of the 1992 arms embargo in 2001, but positive changes were

observed in the period after the 2001 arms embargo ended in 2003. This report's results suggest that the UNSC is generally willing to maintain arms embargoes until positive behavioural improvements in the target can be observed. Regularly reviewed UN arms embargoes represent a useful hybrid of the open-ended and time-limited approaches because improved target behaviour can be more quickly rewarded than in an open-ended UN arms embargo case. It is also possible to amend UNSC demands and sanctions in the light of new evidence of poor behaviour without having to implement a new sanctions regime.

### **Recommendations for the UN Security Council**

- Ensure clarity of coverage, scope and demands in UN arms embargo resolutions.
- Conduct regular reviews to assess compliance with UN arms embargo demands.
- Increase the authority and expertise of UN sanctions committees, panels of experts and monitoring teams.
- Establish a 'clearing house' for UN sanctions committees, panels of experts and monitoring teams.
- Assess and strengthen the capacity of member states to implement arms embargoes.
- Target governmental and non-governmental actors that assist in the violation of a UN arms embargo.
- Promote the adoption of national legislation criminalizing UN arms embargo violations.
- Improve international harmonization of efforts to limit arms brokers' violations of UN arms embargoes.
- Clearly define 'conflict goods' and measures for embargoing their export in combination with UN arms embargoes.

**Table A.1.** UN arms embargoes, 1945–2006

Target	UNSC resolution	Date passed	Date lifted
<b>Mandatory, 1945–90</b>			
Rhodesia	232 <sup>a</sup>	16 Dec. 1966	21 Dec. 1979
South Africa	418	4 Nov. 1977	26 May 1994
<b>Mandatory, 1990–2006</b>			
Iraq	661	6 Aug. 1990	8 June 2004
Iraq	687	3 Apr. 1991	No
Former Yugoslavia <sup>b</sup>	713	25 Sep. 1991	1 Oct. 1996
Somalia	733	23 Jan. 1992	No
Libya	748 <sup>c</sup>	31 Mar. 1992	12 Sep. 2003 <sup>d</sup>
Liberia	788	19 Nov. 1992	(7 Mar. 2001)
Junta in Haiti <sup>e</sup>	841	16 June 1993	29 Sep. 1994
NGAF in Angola	864	15 Sep. 1993	9 Dec. 2002
Rwanda	918	17 May 1994	(16 Aug. 1995)
NGAF in Rwanda	1011	9 June 1995	No
Sierra Leone	1132	8 Oct. 1997	(5 June 1998)
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia <sup>b</sup>	1169	31 Mar. 1998	10 Sep. 2001
NGAF in Sierra Leone	1171	5 June 1998	No
Eritrea and Ethiopia	1298	17 May 2000	15 May 2001
Taliban-controlled Afghanistan	1333 <sup>c</sup>	19 Dec. 2000	(16 Jan. 2002)
Liberia	1343	7 Mar. 2001	(22 Dec. 2003)
Al-Qaeda, Taliban and associated individuals and entities	1390	16 Jan. 2002	No
NGAF in Ituri, North and South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo	1493	28 July 2003	(18 Apr. 2005)
Liberia	1521	22 Dec. 2003	No
NGAF in Iraq	1546	8 June 2004	No
NGAF in Darfur, Sudan	1556 <sup>c</sup>	30 July 2004	(29 Mar. 2005)
Côte d'Ivoire	1572	15 Nov. 2004	No
Darfur, Sudan	1591 <sup>a,c</sup>	29 Mar. 2005	No
NGAF in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	1596	18 Apr. 2005	No
NGAF in Lebanon	1701	11 Aug. 2006	No
North Korea	1718	14 Oct. 2006	No
Iran <sup>f</sup>	1737	23 Dec. 2006	No
<b>Voluntary, 1990–2006<sup>g</sup></b>			
Afghanistan	1076	22 Oct. 1996	<sup>h</sup>
Eritrea and Ethiopia <sup>i</sup>	1227	12 Feb. 1999	(17 May 2000)

( ) = Different coverage or new demands were stipulated in a new resolution on or after this date; UNSC = UN Security Council; NGAF = non-governmental armed forces.

<sup>a</sup> The Soviet Union or Russia abstained from the UN Security Council vote on this resolution. See UN Bibliographic Information System (UNBISNET), <<http://unbisnet.un.org>>.

<sup>b</sup> The republics of Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the former Yugoslavia) in June 1991, followed by Macedonia in Sep. 1991 and by Bosnia and Herzegovina in Dec. 1991. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia were admitted as members of the UN on 22 May 1992. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was admitted as a UN member on 8 Apr. 1993. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), consisting of the republics of Serbia and Montenegro, was constituted on 28 Apr. 1992. (Serbia continued the FRY's UN membership when Montenegro became independent and a UN member in 2006.) However, the UN Security Council did not recognize the FRY as the successor of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which it deemed to cease to exist as of 19 Sep. 1992. The FRY was invited to apply to become a member of the UN but did not do so until 27 Oct. 2000. All these former Yugoslav republics remained targets of the UN arms embargo until 1 Oct. 1996.

<sup>c</sup> China abstained from the UN Security Council vote on this resolution. See UN Bibliographic Information System (UNBISNET), <<http://unbisnet.un.org>>.

<sup>d</sup> UNSC Resolution 748 was suspended in 1999.

<sup>e</sup> The arms embargo and other sanctions imposed by UNSC Resolution 841 were suspended by UNSC Resolution 861 on 27 Aug. 1993, following the Governor's Island Agreement of 3 July 1993. The arms embargo and other sanctions were reimposed by UNSC Resolution 873, 13 Oct. 1993.

<sup>f</sup> UNSCR 1737 placed an arms embargo on the export of materials that could be used for an Iranian nuclear and ballistic missile programme, listing the items to be embargoed in: International Atomic Energy Agency, Communications received from certain member states regarding Guidelines for the Export of Nuclear Material, Equipment and Technology, INFCIRC/254/Rev.8/Part 1, 20 Mar. 2006; UN, Annex to Letter dated 13 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the president of the Security Council, S/2006/814, 13 Oct. 2006; and UN, List of items, materials, equipment, goods and technology related to ballistic missile programmes, Annex to Letter dated 13 October 2006 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the president of the Security Council, S/2006/815, 13 Oct. 2006. Exceptions were also listed in paragraph 9 of UNSC Resolution 1737. This resolution did not place an embargo on transfers of conventional arms to or from Iran, but an arms embargo on exports of conventional arms was imposed on Iran by UNSC Resolution 1747, 24 Mar. 2007.

<sup>g</sup> The dates on which voluntary arms embargoes end are difficult to pinpoint because the UNSC resolutions establishing them do not usually include a set time limit for expiration; so far, no resolution has explicitly lifted the voluntary arms embargoes listed in the table.

<sup>h</sup> The voluntary UN arms embargo on Afghanistan has not been lifted by a UNSC resolution, but it is regarded as having ceased to have effect from Oct. 2001, when several countries began to openly supply the Northern Alliance.

<sup>i</sup> On 17 May 2000 UNSC Resolution 1298 implemented a mandatory UN arms embargo on Eritrea and Ethiopia (see above in the table).

*Source:* United Nations Security Council Sanctions Committees website, <<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/index.shtml>>.