t·r·e·s·a

TRAINING AND EDUCATION ON SMALL ARMS

cal´i·ber, cal´i·bre, *n.* 1. the size of a bullet or shell as measured by its diameter. 2. the diameter of the bore of a gun.
fire´ärm, *n.* any weapon which expels the charge by the combustion of powder or other explosive; especially, such a weapon small enough to be carried, as a pistol, rifle, etc.
mag·å·zïne´, *n.* a supply chamber, as the space in a rifle or pistol from which the cartridges are fed.
mû·ni´tion, *n.* [*pl*] military supplies: especially, weapons and ammunition.
prî´mer, *n.* a small tap, tube, etc. containing explosive, used to fire the main charge of a big gun.
round, *n.* 1. a single shot from each of a number of rifles, artillery pieces, etc. fired together, or from a

SALW Basics – Definitions

module ***SB-D05A01***

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TRAINING AND EDUCATION ON SMALL ARMS

SALW Basics – Definitions

written by
the TRESA team

module ***SB-D05A01***

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List of Icons for TRESA modules

The following icons will be used in the text. These are intended as pointers for actions the trainer or trainee should take while using the text.

Activity
Indicates some sort of group activity, exercise, discussion, division into separate smaller groups, etc.

Case study
Two types of case studies are indicated here:

- Case studies which are required (later text refers to the case, and therefore the case study must be used). These are indicated by an "R".

- Case studies that are optional (trainers can use a similar case study they might be more familiar with, as the same lessons are drawn).

Essential point
Main points that the trainees *must* remember from the training.

Formal quote
Written or pictographic material that is a quote from some other source (e.g.: UN declaration, national law) and cannot be changed or modified.

Outside reference
An arrow pointing to some outside source, for example, another module.

Tag
This indicates an element of the module that the trainer must be careful to modify to fit the audience.

- L: *Linguistic usage*. Where the text uses a particular expression that might not translate well from one language to another.
- C: *Cultural usage*. Where the text uses examples from one culture that might be misunderstood in another.
- S: *Social usage*. Where a text is aimed at a particular audience (example, parliament members) and must be modified to fit another audience (example, military people).

Take a break
Breathe some fresh air, relax, have a cup of coffee, …

Technical device
Trainer must ensure the availability of some technical device: a computer with presentation software, an OHP, a film projector, puppets, …

Tool
A film, a form or questionnaire, theatrical performance, etc., that accompany the module but are not part of it. Most are downloadable from www.tresa-online.org

Trainer preparation required
The trainer must make some special preparation (prepare notes or labels, assemble material, collate material for distribution).

Contents

Trainer Preface

Along with the other modules that comprise the series SALW Basics, this module is intended to provide a basic fundamental understanding of the issue of SALW for trainees who have had little or no previous exposure to the subject.

We recommend that you insert this module at the beginning of *all* TRESA training courses on SALW and SALW-related topics. However, we leave it up to you, the trainer, whether or not to extend the module by doing exercises with the trainees and by providing them with more information.

These SALW Basics modules are short enough that you may decide *during* a training session, to introduce one or more of them if you discover that the trainees need some better understanding of the fundamentals.

For trainees who are already familiar with SALW issues, it might also be useful to have a brief look at the key points of this module to make them familiar with the working definition for SALW used in all other TRESA modules, and to ensure that all trainees are using the same definition.

We strongly recommend that you spend time also familiarizing yourself with the TRESA Module Recognizing SALW and Ammunition (RSA05) before teaching this module, so that you will be able to answer trainees' questions. Although it is not necessary to go into the details of SALW technicalities, we strongly urge you to familiarize *yourself* in greater depth with the issues of recognition and identification presented in the module RSA05 as stated above.

Please note that we have provided you with additional information within a trainer note (see the grey boxes labeled **Trainer Note**) on several occasions during the course of this module. This information is meant to provide you with additional material to answer the trainees' questions.

Please also note that all Module Abbreviations deliberately state only the first three letters (e.g. SB-D), as well the year in which the module was written (05), but not whether it is the A (trainer), or B (Trainee) version, or e.g. 01 (is the first version of this module, 02 the second, etc.). This is to emphasise that all our modules are works in progress, and will be regularly updated and modified (01, 02, 03, 04, etc). We therefore welcome any feedback or comments you might have.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Friederike Foltz, Sylvia Wanjau and Jonas Horner for their valuable input and comments in finalizing this training module.

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Glossary

Ammunition	A warhead and its associated propellant.
Assault rifle	A type of automatic rifle designed to fire bursts of ammunition at intermediate ranges. Mid-sized between a rifle and a sub-machine gun.
Barrel	The straight tube of a gun, which directs the projectile (= tube).
Bullet	An SALW projectile, usually made of a metal, that in contrast to a *shell*, does not contain *explosives*. The term bullet refers specifically to the metal slug that is propelled from a firearm.
Bullet and cartridge	A type of ammunition where the warhead is fixed to a casing containing the propellant.
Burst	Rapid firing of several rounds one after the other by an automatic mechanism in the weapon.
Butt	In a shoulder-arm, the rear of the weapon that is pressed into the shoulder of the user.
Caliber	1) The inner diameter of the tube and the outer diameter of its ammunition. Usually measured in millimeters (mm) or fractions of an inch. 2) Designation of the cartridge a weapon is designed for.
Cartridge	Part of a round of 'bullet and cartridge' shape ammunition that is attached to the rear of a warhead and contains the propellant.
CSO	= Civil Society Organisation; an organization that focusses on the participation of civil society in social and political decision making processes.
Explosives	Substances or mixture of substance which, under external influences, is capable of rapidly releasing energy in the form of gases and heat.

Firearm	Weapon that operates through the expansion of burning gases to propel a warhead.
Genocide	Deliberate killing of people based on their ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, or (sometimes) politics, as well as other deliberate action(s) leading to the physical elimination of any of the above categories.
Grenade	Generic name for a variety of small, highly explosive bombs.
Grenade launcher	A device for firing small bombs to a distance beyond throwing by hand. There are many different shapes and types.
Incendiary	Causing or designed to cause fire.
Inert	An item of ammunition that contains no explosive, pyrotechnic, lachrymatory, radioactive, chemical, biological or other toxic components or substances.
Light Weapons	A crew operated weapon of less than 100-mm caliber. In practice, weapons of calibers of between 12.7 and 100 mm.
Machete	Large, heavy knife with a long blade.
Machine gun	Medium-sized and larger automatic firearm (less than 20mm caliber) that fires in bursts.
Mine	A stationary self-contained explosive device that is unwittingly activated by the victim. There are special mines against heavy weaponry and weapon systems (e.g. tanks, battle ships), but also mines targeting persons (anti-personnel mines).
Missile	A type of warhead consisting of a rocket with some guidance mechanism.
Mortar	"Mini-artillery" that can fire bombs vertically over long distances.
Mounted	Attached to a support, e.g. to a car.

Munitions	Military weapons, ammunition and explosives.
NGO	= Non-governmental Organization; an organization that is non-profit oriented, is independent from the state or state institutions, and works on a voluntary basis.
Pistol	Small arm that can theoretically be fired one-handed.
Projectile	Any bullet, shot or shell fired from a gun.
Proliferation	Spread of weapons, weapons parts, weapons systems and ammunition.
Propellant	The chemical charge in a firearm that causes rapid acceleration of a warhead.
Range (of a weapon)	The distance at which a weapon can cause harm. (NOTE: this differs from the military definition of the 'effective' range of a weapon.)
Recoilless	A form of firearm in which the energy used to propel the warhead forwards is matched by energy emerging from the back of the weapon in a back blast.
Revolver	Pistol that has bullets in a rotating cylinder above the trigger.
Rifle	Firearm with a long barrel, to be fired with the back end held into the shooter's shoulder for greater stability.
Rocket	Type of ammunition that reaches its target through the action of a reaction motor – a chamber containing some combustive material – which shoots hot gases to the rear, thus propelling the rocket forward.
Round	A single piece of ammunition of any particular type.
Security forces	Forces in and of a state responsible for protecting the security of the state and its individuals like the army, police, and non-uniformed police/intelligence. Sometimes private security companies or even paramilitary or other armed groups are also involved in providing security of some form.

Shell	A projectile containing an explosive or other filling fired from a "cannon-shaped" light (25mm-100mm) or heavy (100mm-240mm) weapon.
Shotgun	Rifle that fires clusters of pellets instead of bullets.
Small Arms	Weapons that can be carried and are used by one person.
Tank	Armored, tracked *combat vehicle* capable of direct fire.
Tube	The part of a firearm that contains and launches the warhead (= barrel).
Warhead	The part of a firearm's ammunition that does the actual damage.
Weaponry	Instruments used for fighting.
Weapons of mass destruction (WMD)	Weapons capable of inflicting massive destruction to population and/or property by using chemical, biological or radioactive material.

1. Introduction

This module is intended to familiarize trainees with the core subject of the TRESA modules: small arms and light weapons (SALW). It clarifies what is meant or not meant when talking about SALW, and gives an overview on some definitional problems. It also provides a working definition on SALW, which applies to all TRESA modules.

Trainee audience and objective

TRESA module SALW Basics - SALW Definitions (SB-D05) is recommended for all participants of training courses on SALW or related issues, unless they are already thoroughly familiar with SALW.

Specifically, knowledge of SALW definitions is particularly relevant for:

- People working in a country (e.g. as development or humanitarian aid workers or in other fields, such as medical doctors, etc.) with an SALW problem, who may need to know about the legal situation and its implications for their work in the field.
- Researchers on SALW-related issues, to help them make precise observations.
- Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on SALW and related issues, to familiarize them with the legal situation concerning the definition of SALW.
- Government officials and other people in decision-making positions, to know about SALW standards in other countries and regions and, if necessary, to improve the situation in their own area of influence.

The objective of this module is to:

- Familiarize trainees with the definition of SALW used by the UN and other bodies.
- Inform trainees about different aspects of SALW definitions and provide them with a working definition of SALW, which is relevant for the trainee's work in the field, as well as for using all other TRESA modules.
- Make trainees aware of the problems that exist on definitional issues.

At the end of the module, the trainees should:

- Know the UN working definition of SALW, its strengths and limitations.
- Be aware of other definitions used internationally, regionally and nationally.
- Know different approaches to defining SALW.

Please be aware that this module does not intend to go into details of SALW agreements and regulations in any way. If you want to know more about SALW control agreements, please consult TRESA module Global and Regional Agreements on SALW Control (GRA05) and/or Regional Agreements on SALW Control in Africa (RAA05).

In order to be able to identify some of the most frequent SALW types, we strongly recommend you to also study the TRESA module Recognizing SALW and Ammunition (RSA05). This module provides pictures and more in-depth explanations on SALW and their characteristics.

Description of the module

After a brief introduction to the topic of SALW, the module gives an overview of definitional issues concerning SALW on the international, regional and national level. The definition most often referred to is the UN working definition, which is then compared to those in regional and national agreements or other relevant documents.

2. The issue of SALW

Throughout history, human beings have been fighting wars. To this end, they have developed various kinds of more or less sophisticated weaponry. Since the beginning of the 20th century there have been gradually increasing efforts to regulate the use and manufacture of certain classes of weapons. The use of some weapons, notably WMD (weapons of mass destruction), was rightly deemed, to be too disastrous to contemplate seriously. Politicians, urged on by civil society, started negotiating agreements to better control the threat of WMD in the latter half of the 20th century.

What was largely neglected in this debate were conventional arms of smaller size: pistols, rifles, machine guns, and other so-called small arms and light weapons (SALW). Instead of adequately controlling them, they were produced, bought, sold and resold in high quantities, throughout the world, and found their way from one conflict zone to the next. And they were – and still are – used. It is estimated that every year, hundreds of thousands of people die of armed violence, more than 1 million people are injured. Many of the victims are children. SALW are not only used in wars, but also in intra-state conflicts, as well as in non-conflict environments to 'solve' interpersonal conflicts and to engage in criminal activities.

Confronted with an estimated 640 million SALW worldwide, it has been realized in recent years that the spread of SALW is an urgent problem that has to be faced.

Facing this problem requires, among other things, some agreed method of defining the weapons under consideration. This has not proven to be very simple.

Trainer Note

If there is the need and you have enough time, we suggest you choose one (or both) of the exercises below in order to make the training more interactive.

We suggest doing the exercise(s) at the very beginning of the training as this helps people to focus on the topic.

Exercise 1:

Discussion: "What is a weapon?" Ask the trainees to discuss this question. During the discussion they should note that there are different kinds of weapons, and that some items can be used as weapons although they were not designed as such.

As an operative definition, a weapon can be defined as any item that is used, has been designed to be used for, or is intended to be used for causing injury or death to an animal or human being.

The Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary provides some more aspects:
"[...]
An instrument of any kind used for fighting
Any organ (of an animal or plant) so used
Any means of attack or defense; as, his best weapon was silence. [...]"

Depending on your personal liking, we recommend you to do *either* Exercise 2 *or* Exercise 3 with the trainees.

Exercise 2:

Brainstorming: Ask trainees to write down items they would classify as 'weapons' on cards. Then place them into categories as suggested by the trainees. Help them understand that it is not so easy to group weapons strictly to one category, and that some items can be used as weapons although they were not designed as such. Trainees will probably first suggest categories like 'firearms'/ 'items you can shoot with', other war machinery (tanks, rockets, fighter aircraft, etc), weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and might later realize that they also need other categories, like 'weapons with blades' (knives, machetes, etc), 'other items' (spears, knives, machetes, clubs, poison, rope, etc.) or 'explosives'.
Discuss the concept of a 'weapon'.

➔

3. Formal definitions

Exercise 1:

Discussion: "What is a weapon?"

Exercise 2:

Brainstorming: write down items you would classify as 'weapons' on cards. Then arrange them in categories you and your fellow trainees have chosen/ suggested.

Exercise 3:

"What is an SALW?"

Firearms, shotguns, rifles, pistols, revolvers: there are a multitude of terms used, and a wide variety of distinct and unique weapons available. So which technical term is being used for which weapon? The wider term used at UN level and among NGOs concerned with SALW-related issues is 'small arms and light weapons'. This umbrella term is both technical and highly inclusive, but more likely to be used by experts than in everyday language.

It might come as some surprise to know that a grenade launcher that fires 40- mm thick ammunition should be known as a 'small arm', or that a gun capable of firing 400 rounds a minutes is considered a 'light weapon', but there you are.

Even among states there is a notable lack of agreement with regard to defining just what a small arm or light weapon is, with the same weapon type often referred to under an entirely different name, or a specific weapon being categorized in a different subgroup.

Some of the major definitions used are given below.

3.1 The United Nations definition

In 1997, a Panel of Government Experts on Small Arms developed a working definition for its report to the United Nations (UN), which since then has been applied during negotiations at UN level. This is less a 'definition' and more a list of those weapons the participants in the panel hoped would be acceptable for definition as SALW to the governments concerned. The definitional elements most often drawn upon by both states and NGOs for documents, during SALW

Exercise 3

Either show the trainees the weapons cards (see Annex I), or let each trainee pick a card from a pile. Ask them to decide which cards they think show an SALW and which do not, and why.

You will notice that the same exercise is featured in the SALW Basics-Recognizing SALW and Ammunition module (SB-R05). If you train both modules you will most likely not want to do the same exercise twice. Please then decide whether it makes more sense for your trainee group to include this exercise in this module, or in the SALW Basics-Recognizing SALW and Ammunition module (SB-R05).

Keep the cards handy: You will want to show them *again* after the module is done, to assess whether the lessons have been learned.

control campaigns, and for application in legal texts, are those in § 25 of the report **"…small arms are those weapons designed for personal use, and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew."**

Box 1

Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, A/52/298, 27 August 1997:[1]

§ 25. [...] Broadly speaking, small arms are those weapons designed for personal use, and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew.

§ 26. Based on this broad definition and on an assessment of weapons actually used in conflicts being dealt with by the United Nations, the weapons addressed in the present report are categorized as follows:

(a) Small arms:

(i) Revolvers and self-loading pistols;

(ii) Rifles and carbines;

(iii) Sub-machine-guns;

(iv) Assault rifles;

(v) Light machine-guns;

(b) Light weapons:

(i) Heavy machine-guns;

(ii) Hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers;

(iii) Portable anti-aircraft guns;**

(iv) Portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles;**

(v) Portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems;**

(vi) Portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems;

(vii) Mortars of calibres of less than 100 mm;

➔

[1]http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/source_documents/UN%20Documents/Other%20UN%20Documents/A_52_298.pdf

Trainer Note

For most trainees it will not be relevant to know what exactly a mortar is or what the difference is between a medium and a heavy machine gun. However, be prepared to have these questions asked. We therefore recommend that you familiarize yourself with these issues in more depth by reading TRESA module Recognizing SALW and Ammunition (RSA05).

If your time is very limited, you don't have to focus on any of the regional examples of section 3.2**.** It is however necessary to make trainees aware of the fact that international, regional and national agreements use different definitions and are not always very precise. Also, ammunition and explosives are not always included.

If time allows, we strongly recommend discussing the UN definition with the trainees, and how SALW are categorized. Trainees should understand the division of SALW into:

- **Small arms**, which are broadly categorized as **those weapons intended for use by individual members of armed or security forces**.
- **Light weapons**, which are broadly categorized as **those weapons intended for use by several members of armed or security forces serving as a crew**.

(See also Exercise 4 in Section 3.2).

(c) Ammunition and explosives:

(i) Cartridges (rounds) for small arms;

(ii) Shells and missiles for light weapons;

(iii) Mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems;

(iv) Anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades;

(v) Landmines;

(vi) Explosives.

** These weapons are sometimes mounted.

Not included in the definition of SALW are so called 'cold arms' or *"arms blanches"*, including machetes, knives, or swords, or other implements that can be used as weapons, e.g. sticks and clubs. This is mainly because it would be very difficult to have international regulations concerning the use, sale, or transfer of either, as they are often also used as tools or household items. However, such implements can, and notoriously, have been used to commit atrocities and genocide, and there are attempts to find ways of limiting their disastrous misuse by international legal means. Nonetheless, these weapons, or some of them, have been included in the national legislation of some states.

Box 2: UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

In July 2001, the UN convened the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. At its conclusion, the conference adopted a Plan of Action (PoA) containing political commitments and measures to tackle the illegal trade in SALW and provisions for enhancing inter-state cooperation and support. It thus serves as a guideline for states to implement SALW control measures.

Many governments have not agreed with the measures suggested in the PoA because they think it is too restrictive, and still hesitate or openly refuse to

Trainer Note

Please decide whether you want to touch upon the topic of landmines. Your trainees might ask why they are not part of the UN PoA. The reasons for it are explained briefly in the box below. You might want to get some more information on mines from the websites mentioned in Box 3.

implement the PoA properly. Many NGOs on the other hand have argued that the PoA does not go far enough. Two of the shortcomings criticized most are:

1. The exclusion of the problem of private ownership of SALW designed for military purpose from the PoA; and
2. That no agreement could be reached on states' self-regulation limiting SALW transfers to state actors only.

So far, these issues have still not been included in subsequent consultations. There will be a Review Conference in 2006.

For further information on the PoA and other agreements, please refer to TRESA module Global and Regional Agreements on SALW Control (GRA05), or see http://disarmament2.un.org/cab/poa.html

Box 3

According to the ICBL, between 15-20,000 people are killed or mutilated by anti-personnel or other mines every year. More than 80 countries are affected by mines, and nobody knows how many are still in the ground. Thus mines are one of the greatest threats in conflict and post-conflict environments. Nonetheless, landmines were excluded from the list of SALW proposed by the UN Panel of Experts, and are usually not dealt with in the SALW control process framework. This has been done deliberately, because landmines are already addressed in other fora. For example, their use, manufacture and proliferation are dealt with in the Ottawa Convention of 1999, also called the Mine Ban Treaty. Keeping with this situation, we do not deal with landmines in TRESA modules. However, if you want to find out more about this very important topic, please have a look at the ICRC website on anti-personnel mines (http://www.icrc.org), at the website of the "International Campaign to Ban Landmines" (http://www.icbl.org/), and at the website of "Handicap International" (http://www.handicap-international.org). Other organisations too have websites devoted to the subject.

3.2 Differing SALW definitions in regional agreements

For reasons of practicality, many international and regional organizations, states and NGOs draw upon the working definition and categories developed by the UN Panel of Government Experts. However, regional agreements, protocols and other official documents, as well as national legislation or sub-decrees on SALW control, might differ. Some regional examples are presented in this sub-section. If you are interested in finding more information on these agreements

Trainer Note

Depending on the regional context of your course, you may decide that only certain definitions require discussion. You can find the relevant sections of the documents in Annex I of this module. Unless there is specific demand or interest, it is not necessary to discuss all definitions.

and other documents related to SALW control, we recommend you to consult TRESA module Global and Regional Agreements on SALW Control (GRA05) as well as the individual organization websites (e.g. www.osce.org, etc).

Box 4

It is important to keep in mind the difference, embodied in the different texts here, between *legally binding* agreements and *political commitments:*

- A legally binding agreement is one that a government has signed and ratified, thus making the implementation a legal obligation. Violations will bring about substantive penalties when prescribed in the agreement.
- There are other agreements, which do not contain those legal obligations, but only political commitments. The signatory states express their shared will to implement the objectives agreed on, but they are not legally obliged to do so.

Europe

In its *Small Arms Document* from November 2000, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) draws upon the UN working definition by adopting the categories mentioned in the UN Panel Report. For the purpose of the Small Arms Document, it defines SALW as "[...] **man-portable weapons made or modified to military specifications for use as lethal instruments of war**."

Both the OSCE and the European Union (EU) stress the lack of an internationally agreed definition for SALW. In its *Joint Actions* of 1998 and 2002, the Council of the EU has generally referred to the weapons categories mentioned by OSCE. These Joint Actions apply to EU member states, but are also relevant for accession countries (those about to, or interested in joining the EU). However, national legislation can still differ for political, historical, cultural or economic reasons.

Americas

In the United States, SALW are subsumed under the umbrella term 'firearms'. This term is also used in the *'Gun Control Law'* of 1968, defined as "[...]:
a. Any barreled weapon which will or is designed to or may be readily converted to expel a bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, except antique firearms manufactured before the 20th Century or their replicas; or
b. Any other weapon or destructive device such as any explosive, incendiary or gas bomb, grenade, rocket, rocket launcher, missile, missile system, or mine."

Here, weapons designed for cultural, sportive or other leisure activities (e.g. hunting) are excluded. More recently, the *Inter-American Convention* [2], initiated

[2] Inter-American Convention Against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other related Material, Art. 1, §3, 14 November 1997

Trainer Note

The final question in this exercise allows the trainees to address the weaknesses of the international political context, in which *governments* are often the main proponents of these legal positions. These legal stances are frequently taken for reasons of economics or prestige, which allow SALW to continue threatening people, even their own citizens.

Depending on the regional context of the training course, choose either the OSCE or SADC document, or let half of the trainees work on the one, the other half on the other document.

This exercise aims at understanding the division of SALW into:

- **Small arms**, which are broadly categorized as **those weapons intended for use by individual members of armed or security forces**.
- **Light weapons**, which are broadly categorized as **those weapons intended for use by several members of armed or security forces serving as a crew**.

Not included in the OSCE document are ammunition and explosives. Ammunition and explosives have been dealt with separately by the OSCE.

by the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1997 builds on this definition, and serves as a standard for SALW definitions in the Americas.

The Plan Andino follows closely the UN definition by stating that "[...] **las armas pequeñas son las destinadas al uso personal y las ligeras las destinadas al uso de varias personas que forman un equipo** [...]". "Small arms are those designed for personal use, and light arms are those designed for the use of several persons which form a team" (TRESA team translation).

Africa

There are several agreements and protocols concerning SALW and related issues. The *Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other related Materials* in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region from 2001, for example, does not mention SALW in its title preferring the terms firearms and related material, which are defined as "[...] **any portable lethal weapon that expels, or is designed to expel, a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of burning propellant, excluding antique firearms or their replicas** [...]". However, both small arms and light weapons are dealt with in the protocol, though not explicitly named as such.

The *Nairobi Protocol* addresses the control and reduction of SALW in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, and sticks closely to the UN definition.

Asia

In Asia, legal definitions on what constitute SALW vary widely, and different terms with different meanings are used in the ASEAN member states. In some countries they are refered to as 'war weapons' or simply 'weapons', while in others the term 'firearms' or 'arms' is used. Some national legislations include items such as knives, spears, bow and arrow, or even machinery for manufacturing arms in the broad category of SALW.[3]

Exercise 4:

Have a look at the OSCE and/or SADC definition of SALW. Discuss:

- Looking at the document, what are the characteristics that subdivide the category SALW?
- Which class of weapons mentioned in the UN working definition is missing?

In general, why, in your opinion, are there so many difficulties associated with reaching a common definition?

[3] See Katherine Kramer, "Legal Controls on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeast Asia, Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper 3 (2001), http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/OPs/OP03.pdf

Trainer Note

Trainees should realize that so-called 'cold arms' are not included in the definitions. This includes both instruments designed primarily as weapons – swords, spears, daggers – and those that are primarily tools, but can be turned into weapons: machetes, hoes, flails. Depending on the audience, you may wish to remind trainees of the horrible example of Rwanda, where over half a million people were slaughtered by use of cold-arms, or of Sierra Leone, where thousands of people were mutilated by machete strokes.

Be aware that you can only do this exercise if you have done at least one of the exercises provided at the beginning of Section 3.

Exercise 5:

Have a look at the different kinds of weapons you have identified in exercise(s) 1 and 2 at the beginning of Section 3 of this module. Are there any that are not covered by any of the definitions discussed so far?

Remember:

- Different expressions are used for weapons often referred to as SALW. If you are working in or on a specific country or region, or if you are working on a specific SALW related document, you should be aware of what the regional and national definitions are, and what exactly is meant by these terms.
- Definitions are not an end in and of themselves. They are nonetheless important because they are intended for two *different* purposes that you must keep in mind:

  1. To confer legal validity (which, in turn, means they are often politicized and do not fully reflect some of the problems [e.g. types of firearms] that are greatest in the area you are concerned with).
  2. To enable people to have a common language, which they can use to conceptualize the problem, prepare plans, and generally communicate with one another.

- The reason we discuss these definitions in this module is to make you aware of these two rather different uses of the definitions, and to avoid the pitfalls you might find when using these terms with others without having agreed on a definition beforehand.

Trainer Note

Purely military, technical, economic, and other definitions will be different, once again, from the definitions we are concerned with here. You should be aware that these other definitions exist (for example, the military do *not* use the term 'SALW' though they have no direct relevance to our work.

4. Definition aspects

For reasons of practicability, *in most SALW control related work and publications* SALW are divided into 3 categories:

- **Small arms** are those arms designed for personal use. They can be maintained, carried and used by one person.
- **Light weapons** are weapons that can be maintained, used and carried by small groups (2-3 persons), or transported by small vehicles or pack animals.
- **Ammunition and explosives** form an integral part of small arms and light weapons, since weapons can be rendered useless without appropriate ammunition.

These categories are not very precise. Medium machine guns are considered "crew served weapons" but they are designed for, and indeed can be used by, a single individual. Nonetheless, these definitional categories can serve as a good guideline for all those doing general work on SALW. If you need to have more specific details on types of weapons, please refer to the TRESA module Recognizing SALW and Ammunition (RSA05).

Additionally, SALW can be categorized in terms of the use these arms are originally designed for:

- Arms designed for strictly military purpose.
- Those designed to be used by civilians. The latter include, for example, weapons for hunting sport shooting or collection, or traditional arms.

However, in some cases, categories cross. For example, in some countries, weapons used by police officers are considered civilian arms, and military arms might be used by civilians if they get hold of them.

Remember: no matter whether SALW have originally been designed for military or civilian purpose, both can cause severe injuries and kill!
For example, most crimes and murders in non-war situations are committed using non-military arms!

You can also define SALW in technical terms, based on the way they function. From this perspective, all SALW, however they are *legally* defined, have the same *technical* features:

- SALW consist of a **tube** of some form …
- That propels a **warhead,** …
- By means of quick-burning expanding gases from a **propellant**, …
- Intended to cause damage to people or property …
- And the various inert and explosive warheads that are shot or thrown at a target, such as **bullets**, **grenades**, or **rockets**.

Taking this technical characterization into account, we would suggest that a useful, workable definition (ignoring political and national preferences) for SALW is:

Box 5

All lethal conventional munitions (arms and ammunition) that can be carried, maintained and used by an individual or a small group of individuals, or transported by a small vehicle or pack animal, and that do not require a substantial logistic and maintenance capability.

Unless otherwise stated, all the above definitions are those used in all TRESA training material.

Annex I:

Cards exercise. "What is an SALW?"

Trainer Note to the cards.

This activity is intended to serve as a recognition exercise by distinguishing between items classified as 'Small Arms and Light Weapons' and those that are not. There are three categories of image shown on these cards:

- **Non-weapons.** These are simply items that cannot be classified in any way as weapons as they are, in their intended state, not manufactured for causing the harm that 'weapons' are designed to do.
- **Non-SALW Weapons.** These can include "*armes blanches*" such as knives, spears, clubs and other items that, while intended to cause harm and injury, do not fall within the categories of SALW (see TRESA Module SALW Basics-Definitions (SB-D05) for further information on these often cloudy definitions).
- **Small Arms or Light Weapons and Munitions/Explosives.** These cards show items classified as 'Small Arms', 'Light Weapons', 'Munitions' or 'Explosives' under the TRESA project's standardized definition (see TRESA Module SALW Basics-Definitions (SB-D05).

Some items may either *seem* to represent visually a SALW (but in fact will not be defined as such), and some may hold potential through modification of being classified as an SALW. The brief comments on each card below should aid you in clarifying each classification to trainees.

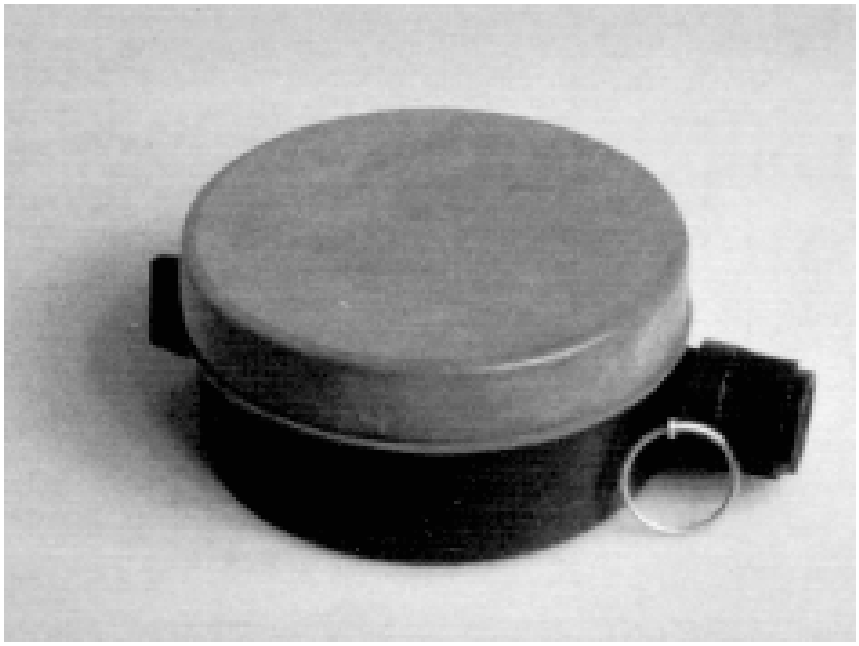
We recommend you to cut the weapons cards below along the indicated line. Once you have cut the cards, fold the descriptions on the right hand side back, so that they are only visible for you. Thus, the trainees are only able to see the photos.

fold back

1) Browning 9mm Handgun (Small Arm):
As a semi-automatic pistol, the Browning 9mm is certainly considered a small arm. It can be used of course by a single person and is 7.75inches or 197mm long.

2) Tin Cans (Non-Weapon):
Two main points should be stressed during the display of this card. First, tin cans hold great potential as homemade bombs, which *are* generally considered SALW. Suspicious wiring or weight can be evidence of this, though with such a massive prevalence of can/tin-contained drinks around the world, the idea of this card is merely to raise the issue that ordinary objects can be occasionally modified to cause harm. Second, there is a later card depicting grenades of various types. Comparison of the two pictures is helpful as a guide to grenades as they are often representatives of tin cans.

fold back

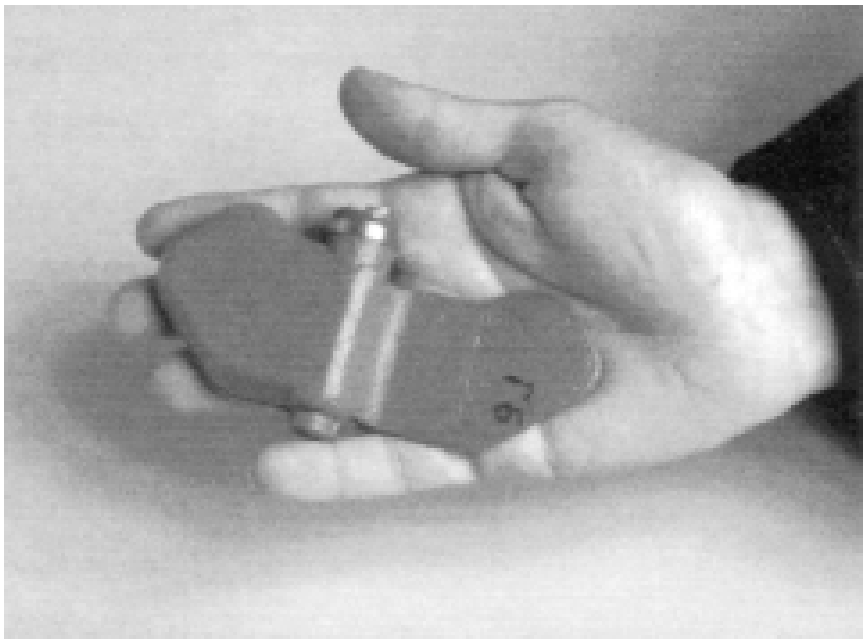


3) PMN Mine (Explosive):
There may be an initial reaction among trainees that this looks rather more like a kitchen implement such as a pan or covered pot, but the PMN mine contains a large amount of explosive, and the injuries it inflicts are often fatal. It is designed in such a way that it is practically impossible to neutralize. As a safety precaution for those laying this mine, a 15- to 20- minute delay mechanism is activated when the mine is armed[1].

[1] http://www.fourmilab.ch/minerats/figures/mines.html

4) Gardening shears (Non-weapon):
such tools can potentially be offered as incentives in disarmament schemes. They are certainly dangerous, looking like a large pair of scissors, but are intended for use in trimming hedges or grass).

fold back



5) Butterfly Mine (Explosive):
Known as a 'butterfly mine' because of its shape, this mine is often attractive to children who are believe that it is a toy due to its shape. Some versions of butterfly mines contain self-destruct mechanisms whereby the mine explodes after 24 hours. It is generally produced in shades of brown, green and white.

6) Heavy Machine Gun (Light weapon).
The Russian DShK (or Dushka as it is more commonly known) has been used as an anti-aircraft or infantry-support weapon and is sometimes mounted in tanks or trucks. It weighs 34kg and is 1625mm long. Any Dushka you might come across are likely to be older as they have been used throughout World War II, and production was stopped in 1980.

fold back

7) AK-47 or 'Kalashnikov' Assault Rifle (Small Arm):
The most widely dispersed, available, copied and prolific small arm of the second half of the 20th century, AK-47's or just 'AK's' are easily recognizable from their curved magazine. There are many, many copies of this weapon manufactured worldwide. There are various calibrations with folding buttstocks and circular drum magazines, but this picture depicts the usual 870mm version of the weapon, with most weighing approximately 4kg. It's longevity and reliability is legendary and with just 16 moving parts, it is very simple to operate effectively.

8) Hoe (non-weapon).
Also a good potential incentive for disarmament, a hoe is highly recognizable in many regions as an essential farming too.)

fold back

9) Molotov Cocktail (Explosive):
While made of a set of very ordinary household items such as kerosene, spirits and tar, the Molotov cocktail is highly explosive. It was initially an anti-tank weapon but can be seen in many violent protests and insurgencies.

10) Farm tools (non-weapon).
These tools are quite useless in any other capacity other than farming or gardening. Ideally, they are used simply for turning or tilling the soil in preparation for planting.

fold back

11) Lion (Non-Weapon):
While both fierce and dangerous and armed with large teeth, lions (and all other animals) are *not* small arms or light weapons. The lethality of a given object has nothing to do with its classification as a small arm or light weapon.

12) FN FAL Light Automatic Rifle (SALW):
The FN FAL is clearly a SALW. It is both famous and widespread in several varying configurations and can weight 4-4.5kg and a length of anywhere from 750mm-1100mm.

fold back

13) Wooden toy train (non-weapon).
This train is nothing more than a toy.

14) Hammer (Non-Weapon):
While hammers and other general tools can have use as weapons, they are not intended as such. One is more likely to find them being part of an exchange for weapons as has been seen in Mozambique in tools-for-weapons collection programs.

fold back

15) Grenades (Explosives):
This card depicts various types of grenade. The two at bottom left of the picture can be compared with the tin cans shown earlier. Note the similarities in appearance.

16) Radio (Non-Weapon):
This picture is simply of a radio. Useful in conflict and post-conflict areas for broadcasts of weapons collection and destruction programs and for other aid and reintegration events, but otherwise, rather harmless.

fold back

17) Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) (Light Weapon):
RPGs are reloadable, shoulder-fired, anti-tank or anti-personnel weapons that launch oversized rocket-assisted grenades. It is classified as a light weapon as operators of RPGs are often deployed with an assistant grenadier who provides covering fire and reloads the RPG[2].

[2] http://www.defense-update.com/products/r/rpg.htm

18) Clusterbomb (Explosive):
as anti armor/anti personnel mines, cluster weapons are munitions containers that break open in mid-air and disperse smaller munitions or submunitions. These munitions are usually designed to explode on impact, just before impact or a short time after impact. Cluster weapons are carried by a variety of delivery systems, including bombs dropped from aircraft, rocket launchers and artillery projectiles. Cluster weapon delivery systems often carry hundreds of sub-munitions, saturating an area with flying shards of steel. These sub-munitions are small, often the size of a baseball or small lawn dart. Depending on the delivery system, the submunitions from one munitions container may cover an area the size of several football fields[3].

[3] http://www.mcc.org/clusterbomb/drop_today/index.html

fold back

19) Bulletpen (non-weapon): This souvenir pen was made out of two spent bullets left over from the Bosnian war. These are now sold as souvenirs in Bosnia.

20) Spent bullets and shells converted to art (non-weapon): For sale at the Turkish market in Sarajevo, Summer 2005.

Annex II

Excerpts from the *OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons (FSCEW231):*

* There is not yet an internationally agreed definition of Small Arms and Light weapons.

This document will apply to the following categories of weapons while not prejudging any future internationally agreed definition of small arms and light weapons. These categories may be subject to further clarification and will be reviewed in the light of any such future internationally agreed definition.

For the purposes of this document, small arms and light weapons are man-portable weapons made or modified to military specifications for use as lethal instruments of war.

Small arms are broadly categorized as those weapons intended for use by individual members of armed or security forces. They include revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns.

Light weapons are broadly categorized as those weapons intended for use by several members of armed or security forces serving as a crew. They include heavy machine guns; hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers; portable anti-aircraft guns; portable anti-tank guns; recoilless rifles; portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of antiaircraft missile systems; and mortars of caliber less than 100 mm.

For further information see http://www.smallarmssurvey.org

Excerpts from the *EU Council Joint Action of 12 July 2002 (2002/589/CFSP):*

The Joint Action shall apply to the following categories of weapons, while not prejudging any future internationally agreed definition of small arms and light weapons. These categories may be subject to further clarification, and may be reviewed in the light of any such future internationally agreed definition.

(a) Small arms and accessories specially designed for military use:

- machine-guns (including heavy machine-guns).
- Sub-machine guns, including machine pistols.
- Fully automatic rifles.
- Semi-automatic rifles, if developed and/or introduced as a model for an armed force.
- Moderators (silencers).

(b) Man or crew-portable light weapons:

- Cannon (including automatic cannon), howitzers and mortars of less than 100-mm caliber.
- Grenade launchers.
- Anti-tank weapons, recoilless guns (shoulder-fired rockets).
- Anti-tank missiles and launchers.
- Anti-aircraft missiles/man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS).

For further information see http://www.sipri.org

Excerpts from the *Inter-American Convention, art. 1, §3-6:*

3. "Firearms":

a. Any barreled weapon which will or is designed to or may be readily converted to expel a bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, except antique firearms manufactured before the 20th Century or their replicas; or

b. Any other weapon or destructive device such as any explosive, incendiary or gas bomb, grenade, rocket, rocket launcher, missile, missile system, or mine.

4. "Ammunition": the complete round or its components including cartridge cases, primers, propellant powder, bullets, or projectiles that are used in any firearm.

5. "Explosives": any substance or article that is made, manufactured, or used to produce an explosion, detonation, or propulsive or pyrotechnic effect, except:

a. Substances and articles that are not in and of themselves explosive; or

b. Substances and articles listed in the Annex to this Convention.

6. "Other related materials": any component, part, or replacement part of a firearm, or an accessory, which can be attached to a firearm.

For further information see http://www.oas.org

Excerpts from the Decisión 552, *Plan Andino para la Prevención, Combate y Erradicación del Tráfico Ilícito de Armas Pequeñas y Ligeras en todos sus aspectos, Anexo 1:*

c) **Armas pequeñas y ligeras:** las armas pequeñas son las destinadas al uso personal y las ligeras las destinadas al uso de varias personas que forman un equipo.

En la categoría de armas pequeñas están incluidos: los revólveres y las pistolas automáticas y semiautomáticas, las escopetas, los fusiles y las carabinas, las pistolas ametralladoras, los fusiles de asalto y las ametralladoras ligeras, así como las armas del mismo tipo, de fabricación informal.

La categoría de armas ligeras comprende: las ametralladoras pesadas, los lanzagranadas portátiles bajo el cañón y montados, los cañones antiaéreos portátiles, los cañones antitanques por-tátiles, los cañones sin retroceso, los sistemas de lanzadores portátiles de cohetes y misiles antitanques, los sistemas de lanzadores portátiles de misiles antiaéreos y los morteros de calibres inferiores a 100 milímetros, así como las armas del mismo tipo, de fabricación informal.

Las municiones y los explosivos forman parte integrante de las armas pequeñas y las armas ligeras utilizadas en los conflictos y comprenden: los cartuchos (balas) de armas pequeñas, los proyectiles y misiles para armas ligeras, las granadas antipersonal y antitanque de mano, las minas terrestres, los explosivos y los contenedores móviles con misiles o proyectiles de sistemas antiaéreos y antitanques para una sola acción.

For further information see: http://www.comunidadandina.org/normativa/dec/D552.htm

Excerpts from the *Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and other related Materials in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region, Chapter 1* (modified by the TRESA team):

Firearms are:

a) Any portable lethal weapon that expels, or is designed to expel, a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of burning propellant, excluding antique firearms or their replicas that are not subject to authorization in the respective State Parties.

b) Any device, which may be readily converted into a weapon, referred to in paragraph a).

c) Any small arm as defined in this Article.

Or

d) Any light weapon as defined in this Article.

Small arms include: light machine guns, sub-machines guns, including machine pistols, fully automatic rifles and assault rifles and semi-automatic rifles;

Light weapons include the following portable weapons designed for use by several persons serving as a crew:

- Heavy machine-guns, automatic cannons, howitzers, mortars of less than 100-mm caliber.
- Grenade launchers, anti-tank weapons and launchers, recoilless guns, shoulder fired rockets.
- Anti-aircraft weapons and launchers and air defense weapons.

Ammunition means: the complete cartridge including the cartridge case, unfired primer, propellant, bullets and projectiles that are used in a firearm, provided those components are themselves subject to authorization in the respective State Parties.

For further information see http://www.smallarmssurvey.org

Excerpts from the *ECOWAS Protocol Regarding the Fight against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Munitions and Other Related Material, Chapter 1, Art. 1:*

For the purposes of this Protocol:

Small Arms: The following portable arms designed to be used by several people working together in a team:

1) Heavy machine-guns.

2) Portable grenade launchers, mobile or mounted.

3) Portable anti-aircraft cannons.

4) Portable anti-tank cannons, non-recoil guns.

5) Portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers.

6) Portable anti-aircraft missile launchers.

7) Mortars with a caliber of less that 100 millimeters.

Light Weapons: Arms destined for personal use and include: firearms and other destructive arms or devices such as an exploding bomb, an incendiary bomb or a gas bomb, a grenade, a rocket launcher, a missile, a missile system or a mine. For example:

1) Revolvers and pistols with automatic loading.

2) Rifles and carbines.

3) Machine guns.

4) Assault rifles.

5) Light machine guns.

Munitions:

1) Cartridges, munitions for small caliber weapons.

2) Projectiles and missiles for small arms.

3) Mobile containers with missiles or projectiles for anti-aircraft or anti-tank simple action systems.

For further information see http://www.fosda.org/resource/ecowas_protocol.htm#CHAPTER%20I

Excerpts from the *Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (2000), Article 1:*

"Light weapons" shall include the following portable weapons designed for use by several persons serving as a crew, such as heavy machine guns, automatic cannons, howitzers, mortars of less than 100 mm caliber, grenade launchers, anti-tank weapons and launchers, recoilless guns, shoulder-fired rockets, anti-aircraft weapons and launchers, and air defense weapons. **"Small Arms"** are weapons designed for personal use and shall include: light machine guns, sub-machine guns, including machine pistols, fully automatic rifles and assault rifles, and semi-automatic rifles.

"Small arms**"** shall also include:
"firearms", meaning:

a. Any portable barreled weapon that expels, is designed to expel or may be readily converted to expel a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, excluding antique firearms or their replicas. Antique firearms and their replicas shall be defined in accordance with domestic law. In no case, however, shall antique firearms include firearms manufactured after 1899.

b. Any other weapon or destructive device such as an explosive bomb, incendiary bomb or gas bomb, grenade, rocket launcher, missile, missile system or mine.

"Ammunition", meaning the complete round or its components, including cartridge cases, primers, propellant powder, bullets or projectiles, that are used in a small arm or light weapon, provided that those components are themselves subject to authorization in the respective State Party.

For further information see http://www.smallarmssurvey.org

Photo credits

1) Browning 9mm	http://www.rt66.com/~korteng/SmallArms/brgp35.htm
2) Cans	Dr. Mark Benbow, www.rustycans.com
3) PMN Mine	http://www.fourmilab.ch/minerats/figures/mine6.gif
4) Gardening shears	Markus Klausnitzer
5) Butterfly mine	http://www.fourmilab.ch/minerats/figures/mine3.gif
6) Heavy Machine-Gun	http://rusmilitary.com/html/dshk_hmg.htm
7) Assault rifle AK 47	http://world.guns.ru/assault/as01-e.htm
8) Hoe	Markus Klausnitzer
9) Molotov cocktails	Korhonen Sami http://www.winterwar.com/Weapons/FinAT/FINantitank2.htm
10) Farm tools	Markus Klausnitzer
11) Lion	http://www.wildlife-pictures-online.com/image-files/xlionmale5.jpg
12) Canadian C2 Squad Automatic Weapon	http://world.guns.ru/assault/as24f-e.htm
13) Wooden Toy Train	Christine Beeck
14) Hammer	Markus Klausnitzer
15) Grenades	http://www.rt66.com/~korteng/SmallArms/grenades.htm
16) Radio	Christine Beeck
17) Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG)	http: //www.modelguns.co.uk/images/rpg7a.jpg
18) Clusterbomb	Colin King, EOD consultant http://www.mcc.org/clusterbomb/graphix/photos/clusterbomb/pages/afghanistan_1_JPG.htm
19) Bulletpen	Markus Klausnitzer
20) Spent bullets and shells converted to art	Tobias Pietz

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