

The Toll of Small Arms

DESPITE the presence of the world's largest peacekeeping mission, the Democratic Republic of Congo remains in the grip of civil war. The reason is clear. A flood of small arms and light weapons undermines the 17,000 United Nations troops' mandate to protect civilians.

In this country where war has raged since 1998, the results of the uncontrolled small arms trade have been brutish, but they have not been unique. Similar devastation from small arms occurs worldwide. Though the United Nations held a conference this summer to review efforts to control the trade, nothing was accomplished. To their shame, governments could not agree even on possible steps forward.

Suffering will continue until governments recognize the obvious — that the vast majority of illicitly traded arms begin as legally produced weapons. They must agree to control legal transfers of arms by adopting specific global guidelines to ensure that those who buy weapons use them in compliance with international law and human rights standards.

No such international agreement exists today, which is one reason imported weapons swamp countries like Congo, jeopardizing the genuine efforts of their people to find stability and build lasting peace. □

Mvemba Phezo Dizolele, a journalist, recently traveled in Congo on a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Rachel Stohl is a senior analyst at the World Security Institute's Center for Defense Information. Mgmt. design is a graphic design studio.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

POPULATION
62.7 million

NUMBER OF SMALL ARMS HOMICIDES
3.9 million people have died as a result of the conflict from August 1998 and April 2004

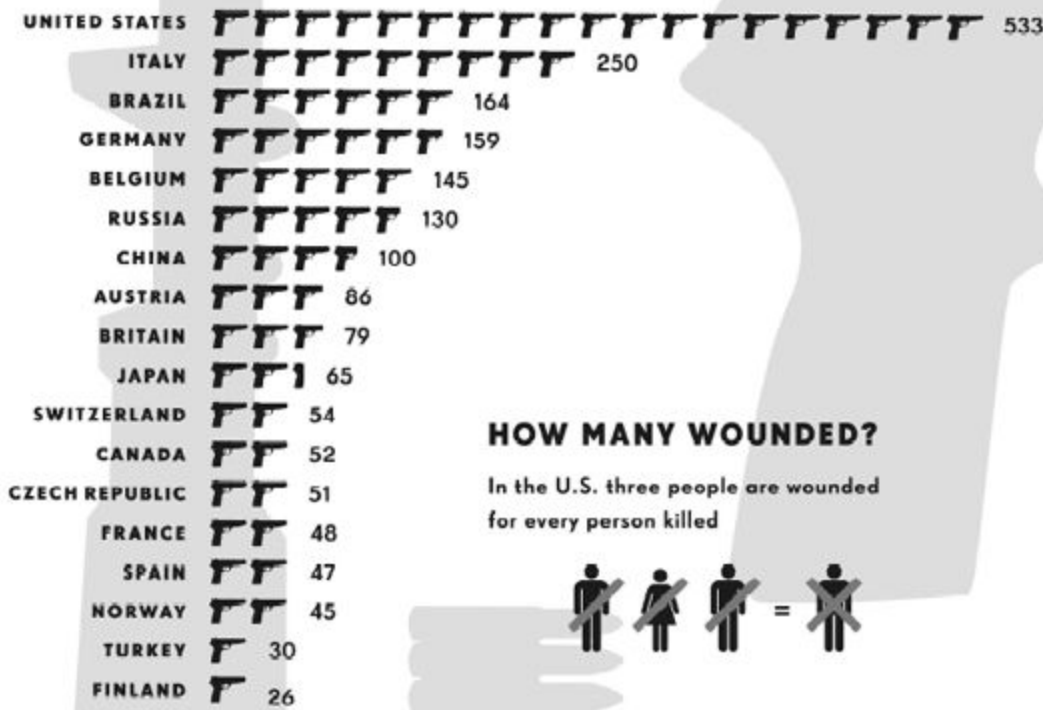
In 2003, 4,900 people are estimated to have died directly from violence

Mortality rate is 40 percent higher than the average in Africa. Over 70 percent of the deaths — most of which are due to treatable diseases — occur in the eastern part of the country

PRIMARY SOURCES OF WEAPONS SINCE U.N. IMPOSED ARMS EMBARGOES
Uganda and Rwanda

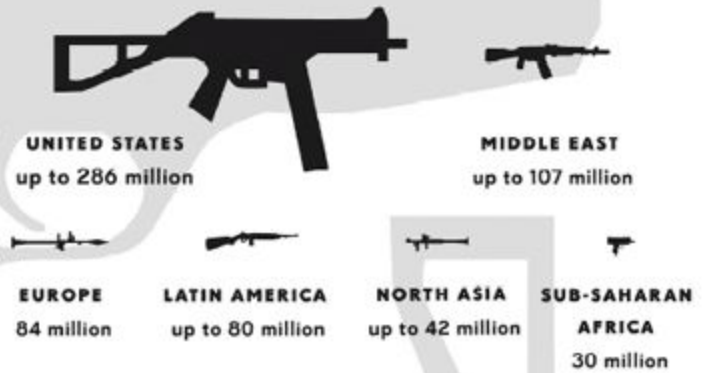
LARGEST EXPORTERS OF SMALL ARMS

Annual value of firearms exports in U.S. dollars



WHERE ARE THE WEAPONS?

Approximate number of small arms and light weapons, in millions



HOW MANY WOUNDED?

In the U.S. three people are wounded for every person killed



HOW MANY WEAPONS?

There is one weapon for every 10 people worldwide



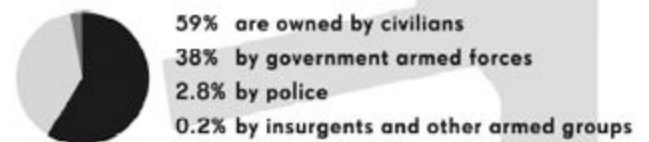
HOW MUCH AMMUNITION?

Ten billion to 14 billion units of ammunition are manufactured every year, enough to kill every person in the world twice over



WHO HAS THE WEAPONS?

Of the estimated 640 million small arms in circulation



WHO IS KILLED EVERY DAY?

A thousand people a day die as a result of guns



CRIMINAL HOMICIDES: 560



DIRECT WAR DEATHS: 250



SUICIDES: 140



ACCIDENTS/UNDETERMINED INTENT: 50