

*The Secretariat of the Fifteenth Annual
Virginia International Crisis
Simulation Presents:*

**The International Convention of
Illicit Arms Dealers**

Chaired by Mark Goldberg

VICS XV

Delegates,

Welcome to VICIS XV and the International Convention of Illicit Arms Dealers! My name is Mark Goldberg, and I am a second-year double-majoring in Foreign Affairs and History, although my studies are really an elaborate cover. I study other countries so I know which ones are weak—and therefore, who will be the neediest clients when I graduate and pursue my career as an arms smuggler.

Globally, the illegal trade in weapons faces several serious problems, ranging from increased weapons depot security to a more aggressive legal defense business. Above all, however, is the serious and unaddressed problem of “haters”; basically are all the do-gooders in the world- police, security forces, the UN- who are trying to shut down the illegal arms trade and put all the world’s hard-working gunrunners out of a job. We’ll see what we can do to preserve a place in the 21st century for the glory of an arms dealer.

Late in the year 2010, the simmering tensions of a post-Soviet, post-Yugoslav Eastern Europe have begun to boil over. Regionally, economies crippled by the global financial crisis face internal social unrest due to staggering unemployment, shortages, and energy concerns for the impending winter. The old specters of the past have begun to stir again, as populist leaders in countries left outside the protective mantle of the European Union turn the attentions of their people toward the prospering flock under Brussels’ leadership. In Eastern Europe, history is lived every day, and the starving seethe at the sight of ancient enemies across the border eating their fill. In this situation, the most powerful international arms dealer in the world, Isak Volkov, saw an incredibly lucrative opportunity, and called a meeting of the greatest arms traders in the world, with a unique proposition. For the first time in history, he suggested that they fabricate a war- that is, prompt as much chaos as possible within and between the nations of Eastern Europe, supply the armies, sit back, and profit. The convention meets at Volkov’s estate in the protective lawlessness of eastern Moldova, in the unrecognized state of the Transdnestrian Republic (DMR).

This convention will be our simulation. I will play the fictional Isak Volkov, moderating debate and attempting to forge consensus. You will be assigned an invented character; their backgrounds will represent the wonderfully international nature of global crime- anyone, anywhere, can become good at it. Each persona heads a well-structured criminal organization, with copious funds and inventories (these will be disclosed to you). Some will start richer than others, some with more fearsome arsenals, some with better contacts and information. It will be up to you, as individuals, to first level the playing field and then rise above it. As you will see, at times it may be best to operate as a cartel and cooperate; at other times, you’ll profit more by acting independently. However, the Boy Scouts of the grown-up world, the European heads of police, will not be happy having so many of us meeting in their backyard, so we will have to watch one another’s backs. Finally, this committee has potential to be a great time, but only if you are engaged in the crisis. Our goal- a self-perpetuating, profitable war, managed by us- is only achievable with a high degree of coordination and cooperation. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to e-mail me at mhg8r@virginia.edu

Sincerely,
Mark Goldberg

The International Arms Market

The flourishing illegal market for weapons and military hardware provides the arsenals for some of the most persistent and deadly conflicts in the world. From the Congo to Bolivia, Indonesia to Uzbekistan, governments, separatist movements, organized crime syndicates, terrorists, and average people turn to illicit arms sellers. Throughout the developing world, proper border control is flaky at best, to say nothing of Western-style concepts of firearm

registration or licensing. In such an environment, black and gray markets proliferate. For the most of the world, illegal arms are the only arms. While a small part of the trade consists of large-ticket items like ships and tanks, the overwhelming majority of arms trades are of Small Arms and Light

Weapons (SALW). Small Arms are any type of gun that may be carried- pistols, shotguns, assault rifles, and some heavy machineguns. Light Weapons include mortars, antiaircraft guns, rockets, missiles, grenades, and landmines, as well as mounted machinegun weapons. The SALW industry has an annual intake of tens of billions of dollars; of this, up to 20% occurs on the

black market¹. Arms flow through a much more recognizable network than do other sources of contraband, like drugs². For example, in the last twenty years, arms clearly flowed from source states in Eastern and Central Europe to states in sub-Saharan Africa. This type of pattern indicates organized recognition of demand in African conflict states being coupled with the copious supply of SALW left in decommissioned Soviet arsenals after the end of the Cold War. Private individuals in the early 1990s privatization craze bought up former Communist stockpiles and became a major source of illegal SALW transfers. Additionally, many new weapons manufacturers have sprung up in developing countries. Lucrative economies of scale drive new manufacturers to produce at high levels and export their surplus, creating another important starting point for the guns that end up in conflict zones³. Sometimes, governments themselves may engage in selling arms illegally (contrary to international law); for many eastern European states, especially Ukraine, arms sales contribute substantially to state revenue⁴. SALW can often come from unpredictable or unexpected sources, such as surrendering peacekeepers or corrupt



Avdomat Kalashnikova 1947 (AK-47), the world's most popular assault rifle. It is ubiquitous on the black market.

Source: <http://militaryvids.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/magyargif.jpg>

¹ Kinsella 1

² Ibid., 6

³ Ibid., 1

⁴ Gilson 1

military officers⁵. Individual entrepreneurs also can make their own guns which cannot be traced back to small, easily concealed workshops- up to 200,000 firearms are produced annually by this method⁶.

Modes of transporting weapons are similarly diverse. Frequently, pitiful border control means that smugglers literally walk from one state to another carrying their merchandise⁷. On the other end of the spectrum, multi-ton transactions require complex planning and coordination. For example, in the 2000 Aviatrend case, a Ukrainian company was slated to legally deliver ammunition to the Ivory Coast, presenting a legitimate end-user certificate to the Ukrainian government, but upon arrival in Abidjan, the ammunition was offloaded and delivered to the embargoed regime in Liberia. The entire deal appeared totally legal. Unfortunately, the company was a cover for an arms smuggler who had forged the end-user certificate⁸. End-user certificates (EUC) are extremely important elements of the international arms trade. EUCs are demanded by most modern arms-control protocols; they document a legal order of weapons or ammunition and are presented at ports of entry. It is generally illegal to ship arms without a EUC dictating where the weapons are going. EUCs trace SALW around the world using gun serial numbers. Laws require individual firearms owners to have their weapon's EUC as evidence of a legal transaction. Obviously, smugglers value the capacity to forge EUCs extremely highly. Similarly, many organized criminals attempt to recruit customs officials into their enterprises to obtain and falsify EUCs.

The very international nature of the crime- a December 2009 crime included companies and destinations in New Zealand, Ukraine, Thailand, and Georgia- underscores the need for cooperation across the globe. In this case, a Thai police officer busted a Georgian-registered plane piloted by a Kazakh employed by a company registered in New Zealand flying to Ukraine⁹. Traffickers know, to an obsessive degree, the laws governing anything from weapons procurement to corporate registry in any given country, and they manipulate legal environments to their ends. Naturally, the international community has a variety of tools at its disposal to combat gunrunning. The United Nations has issued dozens of resolutions proclaiming its awareness of the issue, but largely takes little substantive action. In part, this is because governments benefiting from the sale or procurement of illegal arms restrain the UN's actions. Historically, UN-wide arms embargoes have met with mixed success, and have been used against countries such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Liberia, and Somalia. Regional arms embargoes (such as the European embargo in the 1990s against Croatia) succeed more frequently. Unfortunately, the nature of SALW products makes them both a smuggler's dream and law enforcement's nightmare. They are small, highly portable, easily disguised or hidden. They have a high profit margin and supply if plentiful. In general, the future of the international illegal trade in arms will reflect a cat-and-mouse game as criminals try and outsmart their pursuers.

⁵ Schroeder 69

⁶ *Ibid.*, 70

⁷ *Ibid.*, 71

⁸ *Ibid.*, 72

⁹ Gecker

Moldova



The Republic of Moldova, with breakaway Transdniester Republic (Transnistria/Trandniestria/DMR) labeled.

Source:
https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/maps/maptemplate_md.html

Moldova drew into direct physical contact with the European Union when Romania

joined the Union in 2007. Moldova is a “weak state divided by conflict and plagued by corruption and organized crime”¹⁰, whose frozen conflict with the Russian-supported breakaway Transnistria region continues into its seventeenth year. Essentially lawless, the (largely unrecognized) Republic of Transdnistria, or DMR, became a haven for transnational criminals, smugglers, and stateless persons. The European Union Border Action in Moldova (EUBAM) represents a sizeable commitment to ending the criminal presence in the DMR. The DMR controls most of Moldova’s industrial capacity from its capital of Tiraspol; the Moldovan government in Chisinau has mainly agricultural resources at its disposal¹¹. In recent years, the two sides of the conflict have entrenched themselves. Chisinau, hoping for greater economic aid and political cooperation from Brussels cleaves to EU policy. Tiraspol, on the other hand, is



Protests erupt into violence over Parliamentary elections in April 2009 outside a Moldovan government building. Note that the Romanian alphabet, rather than the Cyrillic, is used on government property.

Source:
<http://worldfocus.org/blog/2009/04/08/moldova-erupts-into-violent-protests-after-elections/4827/>

basically a government-in-exile residing in Russia; in fact, Russian military personnel deployed as peacekeepers in the DMR act as its security guarantors. Talks in 2005 between the DMR, Moldova, Russia, the Office for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and Ukraine (with the EU and US as observers) stalled on good-faith measures, before the negotiators accomplished anything substantive¹². Linguistic similarities between Moldovan and Romanian, coupled with large a large Moldovan population residing in Romania (and vice-versa) have not only established Romania as an important stakeholder, but have also caused leading politicians to delineate the conflict as between Western and Slavic cultures. Such pseudo-ethnic rhetoric took a serious hit in April 2005 when Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko jointly requested the creation of EUBAM with Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin. The combined request underscored the constantly shifting nature of Eastern European politics and proved to be convincing.¹³

Following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the situation in Kiev seemed to trend farther and farther from Moscow. On its southern border, this process manifested itself in a tightening border restriction, at Chisinau's behest, on the DMR.¹⁴ While not necessarily pro-Western, some of the capitals of Eastern Europe have certainly begun to reconsider their strategic alliances with their former metropole in Moscow. Unfortunately for regional stability, large populations of ethnic Russians or Russian-speaking people complicate the diplomacy. Significant factions for re-accession to Russian sovereignty exist in the area, especially in Belarus and the DMR. A

number of politicians within the Russian Federation itself also argue for strengthening ties among Slavic states to counteract Western European presence.

More recently, the April 2009 parliamentary elections in Moldova erupted into widespread violence as the Communist party maintained a majority in the legislature amidst widespread allegations of fraud¹⁵. A generational gap characterized the violence, as young people took to the streets and to the Internet to demand internationally monitored elections. Interestingly, some of the protesters very vocally advocated for reintegration into the Romanian state, charging that Moldova exists only as a province of the greater Romania¹⁶. As this generation stresses the limits of Moldova's remnant Soviet bureaucrats and Communist party, a new diplomatic future may emerge for Chisinau, with potent implications for Ukraine, Russia, Romania, and (not least) the DMR and the international criminals resident there.

In terms of legitimate punitive forces beyond the EUBAM, Moldova is possessed of a small and vastly underfunded military. The Land Forces, Rapid Reaction Forces, Air and Air Defense Forces compose the entirety of the Moldovan military. Clearly, they tend to be for more rapid-deployment purposes in emergencies. Russian forces in the DMR and OSCE/EU peacekeepers (including EUBAM) throughout Chisinau-administered Moldova provide more lasting military presences, although they are both points of contention and may be characterized as infringements on Moldovan national sovereignty.

¹² Ibid., 83

¹³ Ibid., 85

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ World Focus

¹⁶ Ibid.

What You Should Show Up Thinking About

This committee, while it will have a crisis, is anything but scripted. I will rely on you, as delegates, to bring creativity and originality to the table. The committee will be far more fun if it's delegate-driven. The International Convention of Illicit Arms Traffickers is anything but preset. That being said, the following questions may be useful to guide your preparation. Remember, though- you are criminals. You want to make money. You will do anything to make it.

- 1) How can the current political/military situation in the DMR be manipulated to catalyze a conflict?
- 2) Where are the holes in the current EUBAM administration, and who can we win to our side, pay off, or "terminate"?
- 3) How can we use neighboring states and their institutions to establish the legitimacy of our conflict?

Useful Resources for Delegates

Policy/position papers for this committee are NOT required. If you wish to conduct more research, which I recommend, I've tried to keep my citations fairly useful so you can check up on my bibliography. All of your positions are fabricated, as are all of the "criminal organizations" which your false positions represent. You will be presented with a brief dossier upon your arrival at the

first committee session the weekend of VICS.

The United Nations has produced an unbelievable quantity on literature on the topic of SALW trafficking, and provides an excellent idea of the scope of the problem. However, remember that UN documents are written with the intent of ending illegal trade in SALW, and you are looking to further it. It will be especially useful to read up on specific cases of arms trafficking gone wrong, like the Aviatrend case or the January 2010 incident involving For the nature of our committee, it will be the Ukrainian Aviatek company.

At the very least, check out Andrew Niccol's *Lord of War*, which provides a surprisingly informative look at some of the aspects of a gun runner's life- including jurisdictional concerns over getting arrested, EUCs, and managing a stateless identity. It's also the last decent movie Nicholas Cage made before *The Wicker Man* (check that one out too; he punches an old woman in the face!).

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