



United States Mission to the OSCE
U.S. Statement for the
Forum for Security Cooperation:
Security Dialogue on SALW/SCA

As delivered by Arms Control Counselor Daniel Wartko
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Thank you, Mr. Chair,

And thanks to our distinguished visitors for their informative and insightful presentations.

The United States is a staunch supporter of efforts to stem the illicit proliferation and trade of small arms, light weapons, and associated ammunition. This includes support for full implementation of the UN Program of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the International Tracing Instrument, and the development of a global framework for the safety and security of conventional ammunition throughout its lifecycle, which is being negotiated in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition.

Participating States' full implementation of the OSCE's small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition instruments will go far in preventing terrorist and criminal organizations from threatening regional peace and stability.

Around the world, stockpiles of excess, poorly secured, or otherwise at-risk conventional weapons remain a serious challenge to peace and prosperity. In the wrong hands explosive material will fuel political instability and violence, which in turn suppresses regional stability and security. Aging munition stockpiles may explode unintentionally, devastating nearby population centers. By improving management of ammunition – not just instituting best practices and adherence to the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, but also improving physical security at ammunition storage depots – we can reduce the risk significantly.

The United States operates a Conventional Weapons Destruction program currently active in 40 countries to help destroy excess stockpiles of conventional arms and better secure the remaining stockpiles, and to advance humanitarian mine action. We provide approximately \$250 million in assistance annually for this program – more than \$4.7 billion during the life of this program in more than 100 countries since 1993.

States in southeast Europe face significant threats from legacy stockpiles of conventional ammunition. Since 1996, the United States has helped partners in the region better secure their stockpiles through both bilateral and multilateral efforts, including in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

We have learned many valuable lessons through our cooperative work there, the most important of which is that these programs must be done in a holistic fashion, alongside other security assistance and defense sector reform efforts. Another is the need to have both the full commitment of our partner countries and tight coordination with others in the region, given the cross-border nature of the terrorist threat and the ease with which conventional ammunition can be transported.

Every host nation government must identify and commit to long-term development of capacity and capabilities to support physical security and stockpile management. Physical security and stockpile management projects are complex operations requiring significant amounts of commitment, funding, support, and patience from all concerned.

The United States takes very seriously the prevention of illicit diversion of small arms and light weapons that it uses or that is transferred to partners. The risk of unauthorized use or diversion is one of the factors we consider when transferring equipment responsibly to ensure our security and that of our regional allies and partners. This is particularly relevant with regard to Ukraine. Our teams in Washington and Kyiv are working around the clock to support our Ukrainian partners. This responsibility is made more difficult given the danger posed to all by Russia's unjustified, illegitimate, and bloody assault. A key focus is to ensure safeguards are built into all assistance efforts as we help Ukraine defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity against Russia's ongoing aggression.

We are aware of no credible evidence of diversion of U.S.-provided weapons from Ukraine. However, in the midst of an active war the risk of diversion increases, and so we remain vigilant to the possibility that criminal and non-state actors – or even the Russian military and its mercenaries – may attempt to illicitly acquire weapons from sources in Ukraine. There is also the danger of unsecured arms and ammunition being abandoned by Russian forces and mercenaries as they flee from ongoing Ukrainian counteroffensives. Russia continues to deliberately spread disinformation and false reports of alleged illicit

arms diversions, likely intended to undermine the robust support provided by a diverse set of countries to the Ukrainian people.

Given the scope of this unprecedented support for a nation being assaulted and invaded, we have paid particular attention to the increased potential for illicit diversion and studied ways to counter it. On October 27, the United States released *The U.S. Plan to Counter Illicit Diversion of Certain Advanced Conventional Weapons in Eastern Europe*. This comprehensive plan has three major lines of action:

First, **storage and accountability** to safeguard and account for arms and munitions in Ukraine and neighboring countries when they are transferred, stored, and deployed;

Second, **strong regional border management and security** – these are the best places to observe and stop illicit transfers.

Third, **law enforcement**, which builds capacity of security forces, law enforcement, and border control agencies in the region to deter, detect, and interdict illicit arms trafficking.

The United States is working with the OSCE, the European Union, and others to align policy and programs and coordinate planned assistance activities along the Plan's three lines of effort. New initiatives include cooperative training to improve border security capabilities and law enforcement interdiction, enhanced information sharing, and planning to sustain these efforts through the long term. Separately, we also are leading efforts to help Ukraine clear landmines, unexploded ordnance, and other explosive remnants of war from their territory.

This Plan and our progress implementing it also reflects our commitment to responsible arms transfer practices. During peacetime and in low-intensity conflict environments, the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, and Commerce work in the destination country to conduct end-use monitoring, using different scopes and methodologies but working together to mitigate the risk of illicit diversion.

But amidst the war in Ukraine caused by Russia's barbarous invasion, the United States has adapted its accountability practices through expanded self-reporting mechanisms and site inspections (security conditions permitting). Ukraine also provides expenditure and damage reports to document any losses.

The Department of Defense has worked with Ukraine to improve data collection through enhanced technology and procedures.

We know that when the fighting eventually stops, the weapons and stockpiles will remain, as will our responsibility to support Ukraine and safeguard weapons and prevent any illicit diversion. Throughout this war, we will continue to work closely with our Ukrainian partners to ensure all assistance continues to be properly used and safeguarded as Ukraine defends its sovereignty and territorial integrity against Russia's ongoing aggression.

With our willing partners, we will continue to make concrete and tangible progress towards these goals, and we will look to our partners to sustain the capacity we have helped build long after assistance has concluded.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.