

Centro Regional de las Naciones Unidas para la Paz, el Desarme y el Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe

Jan-Mar 2013

# **UNLIREC Newsletter**

## **Central America**

## <u>Central American experts trained on stockpile management and small</u> <u>arms and ammunition destruction</u>

Thirty-four (34) technical experts from Central American and neighbouring countries met in San Jose, Costa Rica, from 31 January to 1 February 2013 for stockpile management and small arms and ammunition destruction training. The event was co-organized by the Ministry of Public Security of Costa Rica and UNLIREC, and was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Federal Republic of Germany.

This regional seminar brought together professionals American Central and practitioners in the field of stockpile management to enable them to exchange information, examine best practices and strengthen their network of contacts. Stockpile management training was based on the United Nations International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) and the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG), the latter having been recently approved by the United Nations General Assembly.



This workshop forms part of an on-going UNLIREC Assistance Package entitled "Preventing Armed Violence in Central America through the Combat of Illicit Trafficking in Firearms", which supports the efforts made by Central American States to improve public security and enhance their implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (2001).

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#### N° 11



Centro Regional de las Naciones Unidas para la Paz, el Desarme y el Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe

## UNLIREC and Belize strengthen national capacities to combat illicit firearms trafficking and destroy obsolete ammunition

UNLIREC – in close collaboration with the Government of Belize – conducted a 10day training course to combat illicit firearms trafficking for Belizean security and justice sector officials from 25 February to 8 March.

The Inter-Institutional Training Course on Combating the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives (IITC), the first of its kind in Belize, was held at the Police Academy in Belmopan and resulted in the training of more than 40 law enforcement officers and justice officials. Course participants bolstered their ability to carry out interactive firearms investigative techniques in keeping with international standards and best practices and received specialized training in the following areas: technical aspects of weapons and ammunition identification, intelligence gathering and crime scene management, tracing and preparation of evidence in criminal proceedings, as well as practical disarmament measures, such as weapons destruction and stockpile management. The course also covered cross-cutting issues related to the use of force, gender awareness and child protection.

Since 2004, UNLIREC has trained over 3,500 law enforcement officers throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, strengthening the capacities of States in the region to address the problem of the proliferation of and trafficking in firearms and ammunition.



During UNLIREC the mission. the Government of Belize also received technical support in the destruction of more than 15,000 rounds of surplus small arms ammunition from 7-8 March 2013. The destruction of ammunition was carried out in collaboration with the Belizean Defence and Police Forces using UNLIREC's patented SAABT (Small Arms Ammunition Burning Tank). In 2012, UNLIREC joined forces with the Belize Police and Defence Force in destroying more than 1,300 obsolete and seized firearms. All of the destruction activities contribute to reducing the risk of both diversion and unplanned explosions at munitions sites.

These activities, aimed at strengthening the capacity of the security forces and reducing armed violence in Belize and the region, form part of a larger Firearms Assistance Package offered by UNLIREC. The activities carried out in Belize were made possible thanks to the financial support of the Government of the United States of America.

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## UNLIREC and civil society promote national dialogue on weapons law in Honduras

UNLIREC and the Centre for Research and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH) partnered to support the Secretariat of Security of the Republic of Honduras in organizing a legal seminar on the draft law for the control of firearms, ammunition, explosives and other related materials in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The one-day seminar (27 February) was made possible thanks to the contribution of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The legal seminar brought together 62 participants from various institutions including the Secretariat for Security, Secretariat of Defence, Presidency of the Republic, National Assembly, civil society organizations, private security companies and shooting sports associations. The Minister of Security, Pompeyo Bonilla, presided over the seminar while the Honourable Deputy Mario Pérez. President of the Security Commission of the National Congress, moderated the open discussions.

During the meeting, UNLIREC presented a legal report on the draft law vis-a-vis the international instruments in the global and regional contexts and the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS). It is worth mentioning that this draft bill has been revised and agreed upon by the security and defence sectors of the Government, as well as civil society organizations, and is currently before Congress.



The Deputies will have to deliberate and arrive at a consensus on positions regarding controversial issues, such as the number of licenses and firearms per person and the possession and carrying of these weapons; the minimum age limit for obtaining a firearms license; calibres authorized for civil use and calibres restricted for use by law enforcement organization authorities: the and functioning of ballistic records; and stricter controls for private security companies and their firearms, among others.

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## UNLIREC and Government of Belize strengthen national capacities in forensic ballistics

UNLIREC undertook a technical mission to Belize from 18-22 March with the financial support of the British High Commission in Belmopan provide training and to assistance in operational forensic ballistics. In 2012, the National Forensic Science Service of Belize received an Integrated Ballistics Information System (IBIS) from the Government of Canada, a sophisticated piece of equipment that enables the rapid comparison of spent bullets and cartridges recovered from crime scenes. In recent years Belize has experienced a marked increase in armed violence with nearly 95% of all homicides committed with firearms.



The UNLIREC technical mission began the week convening a meeting of high level officials from the executive and judicial branches to raise awareness on forensic ballistic issues. The meeting was followed by a joint UNLIREC/NFSS four-day training course on operational forensic ballistics for 22 Belizean officials. The course covered crime scene management of

ballistic evidence, health and safety issues, validation of evidence, forensic examination of firearms and ammunition, recording and reporting, comparison macroscopy and firearms residues tests.

Additionally, UNLIREC produced a set of fourteen Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on operational forensic ballistics to support the NFSS in its on-going implementation of IBIS. UNLIREC will also be providing the NFSS with a detailed assessment of existing forensic ballistics capabilities and resources and future requirements to assist in long-term implementation of IBIS with a view to reducing impunity in cases of illicit trafficking and armed violence. According to UNLIREC's Technical Adviser Philip Boyce ''IBIS is the global standard equipment for forensic ballistics, but in the end must be supported by human beings capable of properly identifying ammunition, firearms and viewing evidence under a macroscope and responding to judges and prosecutors in a court of law."

Sound operational forensic ballistic capabilities, both electronic and manual data management systems, make important contributions in combating illicit small arms trafficking under the UN 2001 Programme of Action on Small Arms.

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## UN General Assembly approves global arms trade treaty<sup>1</sup>

"It is a historic diplomatic achievement – the culmination of long-held dreams and many years of effort." UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon

The UN General Assembly approved a global arms trade treaty that failed to achieve unanimous support [the previous week during the Final UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty], but garnered the support of a majority of Member States when put to a vote [on 2 April].

The resolution containing the text of the treaty, which regulates the international trade in conventional arms, received 154 votes in favour. Three Member States [...] voted against the decision, while 23 countries abstained.

The adoption of the treaty was welcomed by several UN officials, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who hailed it as a powerful new tool in efforts to prevent grave human rights abuses, and added that it will provide much-needed momentum for other global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

Mr. Jeremiæ, [President of the General Assembly, added that] the lack of a regulatory framework for such activities had made a "daunting" contribution to ongoing conflicts, regional instabilities, displacement of peoples, terrorism and transnational organized crime.

Unlike in the Conference, where all 193 Member States had to agree on the final text, the Assembly needed only a simple majority, or 97 votes, to pass the text. The treaty will enter into force 90 days after ratification by the 50th signatory.

The treaty regulates all conventional arms within the following categories: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles and missile launchers, and small arms and light weapons.

According to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, the treaty will not do any of the following: interfere with domestic arms commerce or the right to bear arms in Member States; ban the export of any type of weapon; harm States' legitimate right to self-defence; or undermine national arms regulation standards already in place.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Excerpted from UN News Centre article [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44539&Cr=arms+trade&Cr1=#.UWXZZDdrcdc].



Centro Regional de las Naciones Unidas para la Paz, el Desarme y el Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe

## **Caribbean States**

## Over 10,000 weapons and 20 tonnes of ammunition destroyed in Dominican Republic

UNLIREC technical specialists joined forces with the Ministry of the Armed Forces of the Dominican Republic (MAF-DR) during the month of February to destroy over 10,000 surplus and obsolete small arms and more than 20 tonnes of surplus and obsolete small arms and light weapons ammunition from 4-22 February. These achievements represent another important benchmark the in implementation of a National Action Plan for Stockpile Management and Firearms and Ammunition Destruction jointly developed by UNLIREC and MAF-DR in 2010 thanks to a grant provided by the United States Department of State's Office for Weapons Removal and Abatement.



All weapons were destroyed using hydraulic shears and disc saws donated by UNLIREC to the MAF-DR and in accordance with a set of UNLIREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) based on the UN International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS). Small arms ammunition was destroyed with an ammunition burning tank designed by UNLIREC and donated to the MAF-DR. Light Weapons ammunition was destroyed via open burning/open detonation operations at the Sierra Prieta demolition camp in accordance with the UN International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG).

the То date. as part of joint implementation of the National Action Plan, UNLIREC and the MAF-DR have destroved almost 12,000 weapons, disposed of over 41 tonnes of small arms and light weapons ammunition, enhanced security of 40 weapons and the ammunition stockpile facilities, and trained 56 officials in stockpile management and destruction standards and operations. UNLIREC will be returning to the Dominican Republic in April 2013 for Phase Three of the destruction process. UNLIREC and MAF-DR plan to destroy an additional 20,000 surplus and obsolete military and police weapons before the National Action Plan is complete.

Sound stockpile management, including the regular destruction of surplus and obsolete weapons and ammunition, is a key measure in efforts to combat illicit small arms trafficking under the UN 2001 Programme of Action on Small Arms.

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## UNLIREC and Government of Suriname begin cooperating in firearms stockpile management and destruction



UNLIREC conducted a national firearms baseline assessment mission in Suriname from 18–22 February as an initial step in a technical cooperation initiative between UNLIREC and Suriname. Activities were carried out thanks to the support provided by the United States Department of State's Office for Weapons Removal and Abatement.

During the mission, UNLIREC met with senior government officials including the Ministers of Defence, Justice and Police, and Finance; Director of the National Security Agency; Prosecutor General; Commander of the Suriname Armed Forces; and Commander of the Suriname Police Force. The UNLIREC team also made several site visits to weapons and ammunition stockpile facilities. As follow-up, UNLIREC will submit a baseline assessment report and a draft National Action Plan (NAP) to the Government of Suriname by the end of March 2013. The draft NAP will contain recommendations for assistance in the areas of stockpile management; firearms and ammunition destruction; legal and policy review and development; and training and capacity-building of law enforcement officials including an Inter-Institutional Training Course on Combating Illicit Firearms Trafficking and Surinamese participation in a Caribbean Regional Armoury Management Training Course.

UNLIREC's assistance to Suriname forms part of its Caribbean Assistance Package aimed at supporting arms control and non-proliferation efforts in fourteen Caribbean countries.

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Centro Regional de las Naciones Unidas para la Paz, el Desarme y el Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe

## UNLIREC and the Government of Grenada destroy over 76,000 rounds of ammunition and 120 confiscated weapons

UNLIREC assisted the Government of Grenada in the destruction of over 76,000 rounds of obsolete small arms ammunition and 120 confiscated small arms from 11-12 March.



Weapons were destroyed in accordance with UNLIREC's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which incorporate the UN International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS), using a set of hydraulic shears donated to the government of Grenada by UNLIREC in 2012. Ammunition was also destroyed using a field expedient method in keeping with UNLIREC's SOPs from the UN International derived Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). UNLIREC provided training to two Royal Grenada Police Force officers and independently monitored both destruction activities. Since 2012, UNLIREC and the Government of Grenada have destroyed almost 400 weapons and over 3.1 tonnes of ammunition.

Following destruction activities, UNLIREC and the government of Grenada convened

a national seminar to review the national firearms and explosives act in light of the relevant international agreements, such as the UN 2001 Programme of Action on Small Arms. UNLIREC recommended that government consider the adopting legislation regulating firearms marking, firearms and ammunition destruction and brokering, on the one hand, and strengthening import, export and transit licensing system and existing criminal provisions on the other. Participants from various sectors of the Government were present, including the Royal Grenada Police Force, Ministry of Legal Affairs, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Customs.

Grenada currently experiences one of the lowest rates of armed violence in the Caribbean sub-region and is in the advantageous position of being able to focus on prevention rather than just reduction both from legal and policy standpoints.

UNLIREC destruction assistance, along with its legal study on norms and legal instruments on firearms, ammunition and explosives, contribute to preventing and combating illicit trafficking throughout the island state and forms part of a broader assistance package supported financially by the U.S. Department of State's Office for Weapons Removal and Abatement and Bureau for International Security and Nonproliferation.

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Centro Regional de las Naciones Unidas para la Paz, el Desarme y el Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe

## UNLIREC and Trinidad and Tobago destroy approximately 14,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and one tonne of light weapons ammunition

UNLIREC assisted the Government of Trinidad and Tobago from 13-15 March in the destruction of approximately 14,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and almost one tonne of light weapons ammunition, including mortars and grenades. The destruction activities took place at the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force Teteron and Tucker Valley Demolition Grounds using UNLIREC expertise and equipment. The destruction process included independent monitoring and verification by UNLIREC.

Since the beginning of its assistance to the Caribbean State in 2011, UNLIREC has supported the Government in the destruction of almost six tonnes of small arms ammunition and almost one tonne of light weapons ammunition. To date, UNLIREC has trained six members of the Defence Force in safe logistic destruction of ammunition by open detonation and a further 11 members of the security services on destruction by the UNLIRECpatented Small Arms Ammunition Burning Tank (SAABT).

Likewise, UNLIREC has assisted in the destruction of nearly 2,500 surplus,

obsolete and confiscated small arms and provided equipment and training to the country in order to guarantee permanent national capacity for destruction processes.



destruction The of firearms and ammunition in cooperation with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago forms part of joint efforts to combat the illicit trafficking in firearms, strengthen the capacity of the country's security forces and reduce armed violence throughout the country and sub-region. All activities were made possible thanks to the generous financial support of the United States Department of State's Office for Weapons Removal and Abatement.

## **Andean States**

## UNLIREC and VERTIC assist the Government of Colombia in its Implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

UNLIREC and the Verification, Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC), joined forces to assist Colombia in its implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) from 14-15 February. This two-day workshop

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was the result of an official request by the country and was carried out in collaboration with the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The workshop brought together national representatives from all sectors of the Government, including the health, commerce, as well as the security and justice sectors. Several research and investigation organizations, as well as private industry representatives participated in this innovative workshop to discuss and review the main obligations contained in the BTWC.



Representatives from UNLIREC, VERTIC and the BTWC Implementation Support Unit provided national authorities with technical and legal guidance for the drafting of new legislation related to biological weapons. VERTIC's comprehensive legal diagnostic served as the basis for the debate. The 2012 study compares current national legislation with the provisions found in the BTWC.

The Seminar also provided an opportunity to discuss the creation of a national commission which would be responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the BTWC. As a result of the workshop, an informal working group chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was formed. This working group will spearhead the establishment of the national commission and legal reform process. The working group will also be responsible for the preparation and submission of Colombia's 2013 Confidence Building Measures Forms.

The UNLIREC and VERTIC partnership will continue to focus on raising awareness among States in the region of the obligations stipulated in the BTWC and providing legal assistance in the revision and drafting of national legislation to ensure consistency with the obligations found in the BTWC Convention, as well as other non-proliferation instruments.

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Centro Regional de las Naciones Unidas para la Paz, el Desarme y el Desarrollo en América Latina y el Caribe

## UNLIREC Agenda (April – June 2013)

## April

- Weapons destruction
  Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
- Equipment delivery and destruction assistance
  Saint John's, Antigua and Barbuda

### May

- ✓ Equipment delivery and weapons and ammunition destruction Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis Kingstown, St Vincent and the Grenadines Bridgetown, Barbados
- ✓ Inauguration of new stockpile facilities
  Buenos Aires, Argentina

## June

- ✓ Weapons destruction
  Kingston, Jamaica
- National Baseline Assessment
  Georgetown, Guyana
- Armoury Management Course
  Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

## United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC)

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