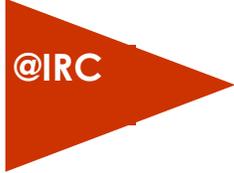


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The U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center is pleased to offer you an "Issue-in-Focus" on **Combat Illicit Trafficking in Arms**.

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Combat Illicit Trafficking in Arms

AUGUST 14, 2009

The destabilizing accumulation, illicit trafficking, and use in criminal activity of small arms and light weapons is a major obstacle to economic development and security. To date, the United States Government has taken the position that illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons poses the greatest threat to regional security in less-developed areas of the world undergoing civil strife. Thus, the United States believes that combating the illicit weapons trade should be the focal point of international efforts.

[U.S. Programs, Assistance to Combat Illicit Trafficking in Arms](#) - On April 17, 2009, President Obama announced his intention to enhance cooperation with nations across the region and offered technical assistance to trace illicit firearms and control, store, or destroy excess national stockpiles. The U.S. Government provides programs and assistance to foreign governments to increase technical and physical capacity in order to strengthen hemispheric security. ([Read more](#))

[Washington Post Editorial: Viktor Bout Decision and Thai Courts](#) - Following the Thai Court ruling against the extradition of Mr. Viktor Bout to the United States, a Washington Post editorial looks at Mr. Bout's connection to arms smuggling, calling him the "world's most formidable one-stop shop for black-market weaponry" and his connection to narcoterrorists. ([Read the full article here](#))

FARC Fact Sheet ([Country Reports on Terrorism 2008](#), U.S. Department of State, April 2009) - The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is a recognized terrorist organization that engages in bombings, murder, mortar attacks, kidnapping, extortion, trafficking in narcotics and hijacking, as well as guerrilla and conventional military action against Colombian political, military, civilian and economic targets. The FARC targets for assassination persons suspected of helping police and security forces.

"Colombia's violent groups are terrorists because the only thing they have produced is displacement, pain, unemployment and poverty." Alvaro Uribe, President of Colombia, January 2008

In 2008, the FARC held as many as 700 hostages. Examples of 2008 terrorist activity attributed to the FARC include the following:

- March: the FARC attacked electrical towers in Nariño and Cauca, cutting off power to numerous municipalities;
- August: a bomb in Ituango, Antioquia killed seven and wounded 50;
- August: a car bomb in front of the Justice Palace in Cali killed four and wounded 26;
- August: two Bogota supermarkets were targeted with small incendiary devices;
- November: guerrillas from the FARC's 49th Front in Neiva killed Caquetá council member Edinson Javier Pérez;
- November: FARC members killed teacher Dora Liliana Saavedra and her husband Ferney Ledesma, in front of schoolchildren, for entertaining Colombian Army members at their home;
- December: the FARC attacked a humanitarian caravan led by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute in Caquetá department with a roadside bomb, killing two health workers.

On July 2, 2008, a Colombian military operation rescued three U.S. Department of Defense contractors, former Colombian presidential candidate and Senator Ingrid Betancourt, and eleven Colombians held by the FARC. The three Americans, kidnapped in February 2003, were the longest-held U.S. hostages in the world at the time of their rescue.

"The FARC-EP is responsible for committing systematic atrocities against civilians. The FARC-EP must immediately stop using gas cylinder bombs, because their use constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law." José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director Americas, May 2002

[International Small Arms and Light Weapons Transfers: U.S. Policy](#) (CRS Report for Congress, October 2, 2006, 4 pages; PDF format; 32 KB)- This report provides general background on U.S. policy regarding the international trade in small arms and light weapons (SA/LW). It outlines major questions associated with the international trade in these items, and reviews United States efforts to assist in controlling the illicit transfers of these items. ([Read full report](#))

[Country Reports on Terrorism 2008](#) - U.S. law requires the Secretary of State to provide Congress, by April 30 of each year, a full and complete report on terrorism with regard to those countries and groups meeting criteria set forth in the legislation. This annual report is entitled Country Reports on Terrorism. ([Read full report](#))



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