

740,000

740,000 PEOPLE DIE, EACH YEAR, FROM "ARMED VIOLENCE" - THE 2008 GBV REPORT

By Paul Gallant, Alan Chwick, & Joanne D. Eisen

It is often difficult to identify how the firearm-prohibitionists lie, because sometimes the lies are subtle, and are often camouflaged to appear to benefit the public welfare.

But sometimes, their lies are easily spotted.

In an attempt to frighten the world's States into signing onto an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), a report entitled *The Global Burden of Armed Violence (or GBV*)* was published in 2008. The anti-gun media latched onto the figure the GBV authors conjured up – 740,000 global deaths per year from “armed violence” – and ran with it.

The report was intended to exaggerate the deaths associated with weapons, and create public hysteria. The scam was easy to see – if only one would actually read the report.

GBV gave the world a new factoid: 740,000 people die, each year, from “armed violence.” Almost without exception, the media publicized this figure, juxtaposed with photos of firearms. The inclusion of the photos of firearms, rather than tanks and/or artillery, helped ensure that the blame for those 740,000 deaths would be placed on civilian gun owners.

Early on in the GBV report, one can see a gross distortion of the facts, simply through the inclusion of a category called “Indirect Conflict Deaths.” It is the title of Chapter 2. The number of indirect conflict deaths claimed by GBV was 200,000. Its authors admit that none of these

deaths meet the definition of armed violence, stating “These indirect victims of war *do not die violently*” (emphasis ours). Yes, 200,000 fake numbers were added into the total of 740,000 violent

deaths – 27 percent! – and uncritically accepted as gospel by the media and anti-gun groups.

We’re not making this up: we lack both the imagination and dishonesty to create such an outrageous lie.

We believe that the GBV authors knew they were lying, and that they didn’t expect anyone to read or criticize their report.

A prime example of indirect conflict deaths occurred in Sri Lanka, formerly Ceylon. In 2009, the Tamil Tigers were soundly defeated by the army of Sri Lanka, after a 30-year-long rebellion.

The Government of Sri Lanka then trapped non-combatant civilians in “containment camps,” and denied them life-sustaining necessities. The British media reported that thousands were dying from lack of food, water and medicine, but the Government of Sri Lanka denied mistreating the civilians. The UN finally admitted knowl-

edge of these 40,000 non-violent deaths.

Chapter 4 of GBV describes 490,000 deaths from “non-conflict armed violence” – that is, intentional homicide. When we repeatedly asked GBV and UN personnel for the data they used so we could check the math, they refused our requests. This non-scientific and evasive behavior raised a lot of red flags.

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NEW LIES

But you don’t need sophisticated data analysis to recognize the use of smoke-and-mirrors.

The GBV authors barely mentioned the significant number of violent deaths perpetrated by government against civilians. For example, in Kenya, it has been reported that up to 90 percent of homicides are committed by Kenyan police.

The GBV authors also glossed over the vast number of murders due to a nearly global drug war, yet included them as part of the 740,000 total. While technically accurate, this category of violence will never be controlled by the Arms Trade Treaty, and should be treated separately as a public policy issue. Its inclusion here is used only to intensify fear of civilian owners of firearms.

We know that the stronger the “war on drugs,” the greater the violence. Anti-gun criminologist Alfred Blumstein scientifically described “excess murders” as the increase in the number of homicides resulting from the increasingly vigorous enforcement of drug laws.

Examples abound. In Mexico, when President Felipe Calderon took office in 2006, he “made combating the drug cartels a top priority.” CNN.com reported that “An unprecedented wave of violence has washed over Mexico since Calderon declared war on drug cartels shortly after coming into office in December 2006.”

In Colombia, in Medellín alone, there were 2,899 murders in the year 2009, “directly attributable to” the drug war, according to law enforcement authorities.

The war on drugs stimulates the growth and violence of the black market on drugs. The danger exists that the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty could act similarly as a “war on

weapons,” strengthening the black market in weapons, and increasing global violence.

Although the reduction of violence is the promise of the ATT’s proponents, they should know that it is a false promise. Their true goal is weapons reduction, regardless of the cost. They lie in order to achieve this, and we should consider those lies as an attack.

Whatever protections our Second Amendment might provide us, we still need to know our enemies. A good place to start is by visiting some of

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the prominent anti-gun websites, such as <www.SmallArmsSurvey.Org>, <www.ControlArms.Org>, <www.GenevaDeclaration.Org>, and <www.IANSA.Org> (International Action Network on Small Arms).

It may be difficult to identify their lies, so a good rule of thumb to keep in mind is that the weapons-prohibitionists always exaggerate the costs, and minimize the benefits to society of civilian-held arms.

* **The full GBV report is available at:** <<http://www.GenevaDeclaration.Org/fileadmin/docs/Global-Burden-of-Armed-Violence-full-report.pdf>>.

For a more detailed discussion of the GBV report, see:

David B. Kopel, Paul Gallant & Joanne D. Eisen, “How Many Global Deaths from Arms? Reasons to Question the 740,000 Factoid being used to Promote the Arms Trade Treaty,” 5 NYU J. LAW & LIBERTY 672 (Number 3), available at: <http://www.law.nyu.edu/ecm_dlv3/groups/public/@nyu_law_website_journals_journal_of_law_and_liberty/documents/documents/ecm_pro_068094.pdf>