

WEAPONS OF CHOICE

Obama revives talk of U.N. gun control

NRA guests warn international treaty would strip 2nd Amendment rights

Posted: November 14, 2009
7:05 pm Eastern

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Gun rights supporters are up in arms over a pair of moves the White House made last month to reverse longstanding U.S. policy and begin negotiating a gun control treaty with the United Nations.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton first announced on Oct. 14 that the U.S. had changed its stance and would support negotiations of an Arms Trade Treaty to regulate international gun trafficking, a measure the Bush administration and, notably, former Permanent U.S. Representative to the United Nations John Bolton opposed for years.

Two weeks ago, in another reversal of policy, the U.S. joined a nearly unanimous 153-1 U.N. vote to adopt a resolution setting out a timetable on the proposed Arms Trade Treaty, including a U.N. conference to produce a final [accord](#) in 2012.



United Nations headquarters

"Conventional arms transfers are a crucial national security concern for the United States, and we have always supported effective action to control the international transfer of arms," Clinton said in a statement. "The United States is prepared to work hard for a strong international standard in this area."

Gun rights advocates, however, are calling the reversal both a dangerous submission of America's Constitution to international governance and an attempt by the Obama administration to sneak into effect private gun control laws it couldn't pass through Congress.

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Bolton, for example, told Ginny Simone, managing editor of the National Rifle Association's NRA News and host of the NRA's Daily News program, "The administration is trying to act as though this is really just a treaty about international arms trade between nation states, but there's no doubt – as was the case back over a decade ago – that the real agenda here is domestic firearms control."

He continued, "There's never been any doubt when these groups talk about saying they only want to prohibit illicit international trafficking in small arms and light weapons, it begs the whole question of what's legal and what's not legal. And many of the implications of these treaty negotiations are very much in their domestic application. So, whatever the appearance on the surface, there's no doubt that domestic firearm control is right at the top of their agenda."

Brian Wood, disarmament expert for Amnesty International, explained in a Bloomberg report why his organization and others are pushing for the U.S. to join Arms Trade Treaty talks. Wood said the U.S. is the largest conventional arms trader in the world and the unregulated trade of conventional arms "can fuel instability, transnational organized crime and terrorism."

"All countries participate in the conventional arms trade and share responsibility for the 'collateral damage' it produces – widespread death, injuries and human rights abuses," said Rebecca Peters, director of the International Action Network on Small Arms in an Agence France-Presse interview. "Now finally governments have agreed to negotiate legally binding global controls on this deadly trade."

But Bob Barr, a former U.S. representative and presidential candidate of the Libertarian Party, explained in a separate interview with the NRA's Simone how a treaty that looks like it's all about fighting international crime will necessarily lead to erosion of Second Amendment gun rights:

"Even though [treaty advocates] all say, 'We are not going to involve domestic laws and the right to keep and bear arms, that won't be affected by all this,' that's nonsense," Barr said. "There's no way that if you buy into something like this and a treaty is passed regulating to ensure that firearms transfers internationally don't fall into the hands of people that the U.N. doesn't like, there's no way that that mechanism will work unless you have some form of national regulation and national tracking."

Bolton not only agrees with Barr's assessment but also sees the treaty as an Obama administration end-run around the Constitution:

"After the treaty is approved and it comes into force, you will find out that it has this implication or that implication and it requires the Congress to adopt some measure that restricts ownership of firearms," he said. "The administration knows it cannot obtain this kind of legislation purely in a domestic context. ... They will use an international agreement as an excuse to get domestically what they couldn't otherwise."

Clinton's October statement of support for the treaty negotiations was filed with a caveat that the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty operate under the consensus rule of decision-making, essentially that its provisions be adopted unanimously.

"Consensus is needed to ensure the widest possible support for the treaty," she stated, "and to avoid loopholes in the treaty that can be exploited by those wishing to export arms irresponsibly."

But Bolton warned gun owners not to think the consensus rule will stop the treaty from passing.

"Consensus at the U.N. is a way of saying unanimity, everybody agrees, but in fact, the U.N. in the last eight years could have been very close to consensus on exactly this kind of treaty but for the Bush administration," Bolton said. "So I don't think her comment about consensus offers Second Amendment supporters any consolation, because absent the United States, nobody is really going to put up an objection to this."

Citizens wishing to speak out on the issue can [contact the State Department](#) or the [National Rifle Association](#).

