

# Conventional Defense

Reducing the risk and harm associated with the global arms trade

The Conventional Defense program at Stimson seeks to reduce risk and minimize harm associated with the global arms trade. The program promotes long-term stability and security by ensuring responsible arms transfer policies and advancing transparent and accountable processes for arms sales. Stimson focuses on the U.S. and international arms trade, the export and use of armed drones, the provision of military assistance to governments using and supporting the use of child soldiers, and the development of international norms and standards to regulate the trade in and use of conventional weapons.

## UNDERSTANDING COSTS AND REDUCING HARM

The international arms trade affects all aspects of international relations, as countries around the world buy and sell weapons to advance their foreign policy, national security, and economic interests. Yet the transfer and use of conventional weapons come with inherent risks. The international arms trade is too often poorly regulated and irresponsibly managed, creating an environment that in many cases increases the extent and deadliness of armed conflict, limits economic prosperity, and contributes to human rights abuses and humanitarian harm around the world.

The global arms trade is estimated to be worth approximately \$95 billion a year. These weapons often fuel conflict and instability. More than 50,000 people die each year in armed conflicts sustained by conventional weapons, with tens of thousands more displaced. And the global cost of insecurity fueled by armed conflict is estimated at \$400 billion a year. Reducing the effect of illicit arms trafficking and the irresponsible trade in conventional weapons will increase stability and security while upholding the values of human rights, protection of civilians, and multilateral cooperation.

## PROJECTS

[Arms Trade Treaty](#) Supporting effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty

[Child Soldiers](#) Examining the nexus between military assistance and the recruitment and use of child soldiers

[Drones](#) Promoting an effective, transparent, and accountable US drone policy

[Managing the Arms Trade](#) Promoting long-term stability and security through responsible arms sales

## LEADERSHIP

**Rachel Stohl**  
Director



[Full bio](#) →

## TRUSTED RESOURCE AND CONVENER

Our method includes building tools for practitioners; undertaking analyses for policymakers and researchers; convening diverse stakeholders to share perspectives, experiences, and lessons learned; informing policymakers and practitioners of potential policy solutions; and participating in public outreach, awareness-raising, and engagement activities. By engaging governments, international and regional organizations, civil society, and the private sector in common cause, the Conventional Defense Program at Stimson addresses proliferation concerns, develops practical and economically viable solutions, and advances international norms to promote responsible arms transfer control policies and develop pragmatic approaches for securing a safer and more prosperous world.

We train government officials on improving their national policies and processes guiding arms transfers; convene workshops with key stakeholders to identify trends and good practices on conventional arms transfer controls; analyze regulations and control systems; and recommend steps to improve efficiency, transparency, and consistency.

Stimson views the arms trade as a central pillar of larger national security and foreign policy concerns – one that challenges global norms and can disrupt traditional approaches. Our staff has expertise on arms transfer policies, multilateral regulatory agreements, and international norms, which allows us to move between the arms trade and human rights communities with ease.

We have a unique convening approach and are a trusted resource for objective, independent, and reliable research and analysis. Stimson's research on the Arms Trade Treaty is sought after by governments, the defense industry, and civil society organizations. Our database on military assistance under the Child Soldiers Prevention Act is used by Congress and the U.S. government, which does not maintain its own monitoring of the law. And our insights on the risks associated with the transfer and use of conventional weapons are relied upon by policymakers, industry representatives, and non-government practitioners alike.

## Contact

For more information about program activities, contact Rachel Stohl at [rstohl@stimson.org](mailto:rstohl@stimson.org). To discuss supporting the program, contact Sarah Savoy at [ssavoy@stimson.org](mailto:ssavoy@stimson.org).

**THE STIMSON CENTER** promotes international security, shared prosperity & justice through applied research and independent analysis, deep engagement, and policy innovation. More at [www.Stimson.org](http://www.Stimson.org).

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