

3 October 2004

Announcement of New Project Research Initiative on Small Arms (RISA)

On 27-29 June 2004, a small multidisciplinary group of researchers on small arms and gun violence were invited by the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation to meet in New York to review the research to date and to develop a strategic plan for expanding the global knowledge base on SALW. The result was the Research Initiative on Small Arms (RISA), a multifaceted, multidisciplinary and multiyear plan designed to increase and broaden the academic research on SALW, especially in those disciplines not currently engaged. The primary goal of RISA is to engage the full range of social science research methods and techniques across all disciplines, resulting in an increase in published academic research

RISA is designed to complement and make more readily available to academic researchers the significant SALW policy research which has been in full swing for the past 4-5 years in a number of institutes, think tanks, governments, international governmental organizations, and in the NGO community. The overarching goal of RISA is to enlarge the global epistemic community that provides the evidence-based knowledge needed to achieve the policy goals of the global effort to prevent and reduce the negative effects from small arms and light weapons.

The impetus for such a meeting was twofold: the growing need to build on the SALW policy research to date, which has produced a plethora of propositions, hypotheses, data and research methodologies; and the lack of published SALW research in academic disciplines which could contribute significantly to the exploration of questions related to small arms, such as demand, impacts, conflict, impact of policy interventions, and other key research findings needed for policy formulation and evaluation.

The initial RISA plan calls for the following:

- ⇒ Publishing an issue of The Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation (HFG)'s HFG Review in early 2005 entitled Small Arms: A Call for Research. (For examples of past issues see www.hfg.org/hfg_review/main.htm). Participants at the June meeting agreed to write seven short chapters designed to promote research on SALW. Each chapter will summarize an aspect of the SALW problem, describe research to date, including a bibliography, and pose a set of research questions. The *Review* will be distributed to a mailing list of 5-6000 individuals and academic institutions from all disciplines.
- ⇒ Developing a separate section of the web site Small Arms Net (www.smallarmsnet), hosted and funded by the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa devoted to RISA products, including published academic research, a compilation of survey instruments, and data collection. The goal is to provide a one-stop location for scholars to connect to previous research and the evidence produced to date. The website will also include a schedule of meetings of academic disciplines (e.g.,

anthropology, sociology, criminology) for the purpose of planning presentations on SALW at these meetings. The RISA webpage will serve as the primary point of information regarding the programs and activities of RISA.

- ⇒ Investigating the feasibility of a one to two-week summer institute to be piloted in 2005 for young, globally diverse scholars and entry-level policy professionals, designed to generate interest and encourage increased engagement in research through exposure and discussion of SALW and their connection to larger issues.
- ⇒ Exploring the development of a multidisciplinary symposium for academics as a side event to the UN Biennial Meeting of States in the summer of 2005 in New York
- ⇒ Generating research support and funding for PhD Dissertations related to SALW.
- ⇒ Developing a set of multidisciplinary academic projects which will encourage cross-discipline collaboration in small arms research. Preliminary topics for consideration include urban violence, arms and societal structures, and small arms and justice reform.

The work of RISA will be very transparent. Initially, RISA will be coordinated on an *ad hoc* basis, with Ed Laurance of the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) and Joel Wallman of the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation serving as co-coordinators for the activities described above. Emily Schroeder, currently at MIIS, will serve as a part-time RISA staff member through December 2004. Until a more formal system for communication is set up, questions on RISA can be addressed to Ed Laurance at elaurance@miis.edu. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

There are no members of RISA *per se*. As RISA programs and activities are implemented and expanded, it is envisioned that a network of a wide set of researchers throughout the international community will become involved in these activities.

Participants who attended the June meeting who will work on the initial set of projects include:

Reuben Brigety- George Mason University-USA
Katherine Kaufer Christoffel- HELP Network- USA and Board Member IANSA
Owen Greene- Bradford University
William Godnick- International Alert and Bradford University
David Hemenway- Department of Health Policy and Management-Harvard
Keith Krause- Small Arms Survey and Graduate Institute of International Studies-Geneva
Anna Khakee- Small Arms Survey
Ed Laurance- Monterey Institute of International Studies
Sarah Meek- Institute for Security Studies-Pretoria
Rachel Stohl- Center for Defense Information
Joel Wallman- Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, New York
Herbert Wulf- Bonn International Center for Conversion