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## **A Message from the President of Americans Against Gun Violence**

**June 5, 2017**

### ***On Gun Control, Like Climate Change, the United States is a Rogue Nation***

On June 1, 2017, Donald Trump announced that the United States would no longer abide by the Paris Climate Accord,<sup>1</sup> putting the USA in solidarity with Syria and Nicaragua, the only other two countries in the world that have not signed on to the accord.<sup>2</sup> Many Americans were appalled, but few were surprised by Trump's announcement. Most Americans aren't aware, though, that on gun control, like climate change, the United States behaves as a rogue nation on the international stage.

The United Nations Firearms Protocol, which bans the manufacture and trafficking of firearms and ammunitions for use by transnational organized crime, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in May of 2001 and entered into force in July of 2005.<sup>3</sup> At last count, 114 UN member nations had ratified the protocol. The United States is not among them.

Every two years, the UN hosts a Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) to review progress on the UN program of action to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms to countries and subnational groups with a history of human rights abuses. My wife and I attended BMS5 in 2014 and BMS6 in 2016 as members of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), a coalition that represents civil society at the UN. We witnessed firsthand the US delegation playing a largely obstructionist role in the BMS process. In 2016, for example, the US delegation objected to the inclusion of any mention of ammunition in the outcome document. When I asked the head of the US delegation why, he replied, "Do you realize how many rounds of ammunition we sell abroad?"

Indeed, according to a 2009 report by the Small Arms Survey, the United States is by far the world's largest exporter of small arms ammunition, accounting for more than a quarter of all international exports.<sup>4</sup> The United States is also by far the largest exporter of military small arms, accounting for more than half of all exports.<sup>5</sup> The United States is among the top five exporters of handguns.<sup>6</sup>

Data collected by the United States Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms shows that more than 70,000 crime guns seized in Mexico from 2009 to 2014 were originally purchased in the United States.<sup>7</sup> The US guns accounted for 70% of all crime guns seized in Mexico and traced over this time period. The United States has also been the source for hundreds of thousands of guns used by criminal gangs and repressive regimes in South and Central America.<sup>8</sup>

The US gun industry is literally making a killing, at home and abroad. Americans Against Gun Violence is working to stop this rogue behavior. The rogue behavior of the United States with regard to gun violence didn't begin with the Trump administration, but as I detailed in last month's President's Message, unless we take effective action, it's going to get worse during Trump's presidency.

With regard to gun violence, America is already "first." First in exports of ammunition and military small arms to the rest of the world; first in supplying Mexican drug lords with assault rifles; first among all high income democratic countries in rates of firearm related deaths of children by a factor of 12:1; first in rates of overall gun deaths by a factor of 10:1, and first in the number of guns owned per capita with more than one gun in circulation for every man, woman, and child in the country. When it comes to the strength of our gun control laws, though, we are dead last.

There are many organizations in the United States that are working on the climate change issue, including organizations advocating that the USA join with the rest of the civilized world in working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With regard to gun control, though, Americans Against Gun Violence is the only national organization that openly advocates adopting the same kinds of stringent gun control laws in the USA that have long been in place in every other high income democratic country of the world – gun control laws that would not only stop the epidemic of gun violence in our own country, but that would help reduce the flow of US guns and ammunition to other countries.

For the good of our country, and for the good of the planet, please join Americans Against Gun Violence, if you haven't already done so, and please make an additional contribution, if you're able. Please also go to the Facts and Faq's page of the Americans Against Gun Violence website to learn about other actions that you can take right now to help stop gun violence.

Finally, as an expression of your solidarity with gun violence prevention activists in the United States and abroad, please wear orange this Tuesday, June 6. Tuesday has been declared National Gun Violence Awareness Day in the United States, and IANSA has declared the week of June 5-12 to be a Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence. When people you encounter comment on your jaunty orange clothing or accessories, explain to them why you're wearing orange, inform them

about our country's "rogue nation" status on the issue of gun control, and invite them to join with us in working to stop gun violence in our own country and abroad.



Diane (helping hold sign) and Bill Durston (behind Diane) wearing orange with other IANSA members at BMS6

In Solidarity,

*Bill*

Bill Durston, MD  
President, Americans Against Gun Violence

## References

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Trump, "Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord," *Whitehouse.gov*, June 1, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/01/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord>.

<sup>2</sup> Miriam Valverde, "It's True. Only Syria, Nicaragua Didn't Sign Paris Deal," *@politifact*, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2017/jun/01/debbie-wasserman-schultz/are-nicaragua-and-syria-only-countries-not-sign-pa/>. Nicaragua declined to sign on to the Paris Climate Accord on the basis that the accord wasn't strong enough.

<sup>3</sup> "The Firearms Protocol," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/the-firearms-protocol.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Pablo Dreyfus et al., "Sifting the Sources: Authorized Small Arms Transfers," in *Small Arms Survey 2009 Yearbook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, "Firearms Trafficking: U.S. Efforts to Combat Firearms Trafficking to Mexico Have Improved, but Some Collaboration Challenges Remain" (Washin: United States Government Accountability Office, January 11, 2016), <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-223>.

<sup>8</sup> Michael T. Klare and David Andersen (B.A.), *A Scourge of Guns: The Diffusion of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Latin America* (Arms Sales Monitoring Project, Federation of American Scientists, 1996).