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United Nations Arms Trade Treaty
Preparatory Committee – 3d Session
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Statement of the National Rifle Association of America

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this brief opportunity to address the committee. I am Wayne LaPierre and for 20 years now, I have served as Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association of America.

The NRA was founded in 1871, and ever since has staunchly defended the rights of its 4 million members, America's 80 million law-abiding gun owners, and freedom-loving Americans throughout our country. In 1996, the NRA was recognized as an NGO of the United Nations and, ever since then, has defended the constitutional freedom of Americans in this arena. The NRA is the largest and most active firearms rights organization in the world and, although some members of this committee may not like what I have to say, I am proud to defend the tens of millions of lawful people NRA represents.

This present effort for an Arms Trade Treaty, or ATT, is now in its fifth year. We have closely monitored this process with increasing concern. We've reviewed the statements of the countries participating in these meetings. We've listened to other NGOs and read their numerous proposals and reports, as well as carefully examined the papers you have produced.

We've watched, and read … listened and monitored. Now, we must speak out.

The Right to Keep and Bear Arms in defense of self, family and country is ultimately self-evident and is part of the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution. Reduced to its core, it is about fundamental individual freedom, human worth, and self-destiny.

We reject the notion that American gun owners must accept any lesser amount of freedom in order to be accepted among the international community. Our Founding Fathers long ago rejected that notion and forged our great nation on the principle of freedom for the individual citizen – not for the government.

Mr. Chairman, those working on this treaty have asked us to trust them … but they've proven to be unworthy of that trust.

We are told "Trust us; an ATT will not ban possession of any civilian firearms." Yet, the proposals and statements presented to date have argued exactly the opposite, and – perhaps most importantly – proposals to ban civilian firearms ownership have not been rejected.

We are told "Trust us; an ATT will not interfere with state domestic regulation of firearms." Yet, there are constant calls for exactly such measures.

We are told "Trust us; an ATT will only affect the illegal trade in firearms." But then we're told that in order to control the illegal trade, all states must control the legal firearms trade.

We are told, "Trust us; an ATT will not require registration of civilian firearms." Yet, there are numerous calls for record-keeping, and firearms tracking from production to eventual destruction. That's nothing more than gun registration by a different name.

We are told, "Trust us; an ATT will not create a new international bureaucracy." Well, that's exactly what is now being proposed -- with a tongue-in-cheek assurance that it will just be a SMALL bureaucracy.

We are told, "Trust us; an ATT will not interfere with the lawful international commerce in civilian firearms." But a manufacturer of civilian shotguns would have to comply with the same regulatory process as a manufacturer of military attack helicopters.

We are told, "Trust us; an ATT will not interfere with a hunter or sport shooter travelling internationally with firearms." However, he would have to get a so-called "transit permit" merely to change airports for a connecting flight.

Mr. Chairman, our list of objections extends far beyond the proposals I just mentioned. Unfortunately, my limited time today prevents me from providing greater detail on each of our objections. I can assure you, however, that each is based on American law, as well as the fundamental rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution.

It is regrettable that proposals affecting civilian firearms ownership are woven throughout the proposed ATT. That being the case, however, there is only one solution to this problem: the complete removal of civilian firearms from the scope of any ATT. I will repeat that point as it is critical and not subject to negotiation – civilian firearms must not be part of any ATT. On this there can be no compromise, as American gun owners will never surrender their Second Amendment freedom.

It is also regrettable to find such intense focus on record-keeping, oversight, inspections, supervision, tracking, tracing, surveillance, marking, documentation, verification, paper trails and data banks, new global agencies and data centers. Nowhere do we find a thought about respecting anyone's right of self-defense, privacy, property, due process, or observing personal freedoms of any kind.

Mr. Chairman, I'd be remiss if I didn't also discuss the politics of an ATT. For the United States to be a party to an ATT, it must be ratified by a two-thirds vote of the U.S. Senate. Some do not

realize that under the U.S. Constitution, the ultimate treaty power is not the President's power to negotiate and sign treaties; it is the Senate's power to approve them.

To that end, it's important for the Preparatory Committee to understand that the proposed ATT is already strongly opposed in the Senate – the very body that must approve it by a two-thirds majority. There is a letter addressed to President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton that is currently being circulated for the signatures of Senators who oppose the ATT. Once complete, this letter will demonstrate that the proposed ATT will not pass the U.S. Senate.

So there is extremely strong resistance to the ATT in the United States, even before the treaty is tabled. We are not aware of any precedent for this – rejecting a proposed treaty before it's even submitted for consideration – but it speaks to the level of opposition. The proposed ATT has become more than just controversial, as the Internet is awash with articles and messages calling for its rejection. And those messages are all based on the same objection – infringement on the constitutional freedom of American gun owners.

The cornerstone of our freedom is the Second Amendment. Neither the United Nations, nor any other foreign influence, has the authority to meddle with the freedoms guaranteed by our Bill of Rights, endowed by our Creator, and due to all humankind.

Therefore, the NRA will fight with all of its strength to oppose any ATT that includes civilian firearms within its scope.

Thank you.

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