

Significant Cases of Global Arms Trade

Syrian preparation for civil war 2009 - 2013

Key Data:

Years: 2009 - 2013

Involved Countries: Syria, USA, NATO and misc. armed groups

Weapon Systems: The specific details of the delivered weapon systems are not explicitly mentioned in the various data of different suppliers

Arms Producers:

Perpetrators/Involved Parties:

Victims/Affected: 470,000 – 610,000

The arms trade with Syria from 2009 to 2013 was marked by various factors, including covert operations, complex networks, and international treaties. The United States played a role in supplying weapons and vetting Syrian groups receiving them, while the delivery of arms had significant implications for the civil war in Syria. Additionally, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and humanitarian law provide important frameworks for assessing the legality and humanitarian aspects of such deals.

Starting in 2013, the United States initiated a secret operation to train and equip opposition forces fighting against the Assad regime in Syria. Through the CIA, the U.S. facilitated the transfer of an estimated \$1 billion in arms, ammunition, and training to Syrian rebel groups [1]. While the U.S. did not provide large amounts of weaponry, it was involved in developing the arms pipeline and vetting the recipient groups [2].

The delivery of arms played a crucial role in the civil war in Syria. The conflict was characterized by the involvement of various actors, including state, non-state, and criminal entities, creating a complex and overlapping web of arms channels [2]. The provision of arms to opposition forces had both intended and unintended consequences, fueling the conflict and contributing to its escalation.

In terms of the legal and humanitarian aspects of the arms trade, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) adopted in 2013 seeks to regulate and monitor international arms exports. The treaty obligates member states to prevent arms transfers that may contribute to human rights abuses or violate existing arms embargoes, including those related to terrorism [6]. The ATT aims to address the adverse impact of poorly regulated arms trade on conflicts, regional security, and development [8].

Assessing the humanitarian law aspect of the arms deal requires a comprehensive analysis. International humanitarian law (IHL) provides the legal framework for the conduct of parties in armed conflicts, with the goal of protecting civilians and minimizing human suffering. The delivery of arms during the Syrian civil war raises questions regarding the compliance with IHL principles, such as the distinction between combatants and civilians, proportionality, and precautions in attack.

A thorough legal opinion on the humanitarian law aspect of the arms deal would involve examining the specific circumstances, types of weapons supplied, their potential use, and the impact on civilians. It would consider factors such as the responsibility of the supplying states to ensure arms are not used to commit human rights abuses or violate IHL.

Overall, the arms trade with Syria from 2009 to 2013 involved the United States' covert operations and the complex networks supplying weapons to various groups. The delivery of arms had significant implications for the civil war, contributing to the conflict's escalation. Assessing the legal and humanitarian aspects of the deal requires a comprehensive analysis of the Arms Trade Treaty and its application to the specific circumstances, including compliance with international humanitarian law principles to protect civilians and minimize human suffering.

Commentary

From a legal perspective, the delivery of arms during the Syrian civil war raises important considerations under international humanitarian law (IHL). IHL is designed to protect civilians and minimize human suffering in armed conflicts. In evaluating the legality of the arms trade, several principles of IHL come into play, such as the distinction between combatants and civilians, proportionality, and precautions in attack.

A comprehensive legal opinion on the humanitarian law aspect of the deal would require a detailed analysis of the specific circumstances, including the types of weapons supplied, their potential impact on civilians, and the actions of all parties involved. It is crucial to assess compliance with IHL principles to ensure the protection of civilians and to hold accountable those responsible for any violations.

In conclusion, the arms trade with Syria from 2009 to 2013 involved various countries and contributed to the intensification of the civil war. The delivery of arms had significant implications for the conflict, resulting in a humanitarian crisis. The legal aspects of the deal necessitate a thorough analysis of international humanitarian law principles to ensure compliance and safeguard the well-being of civilians affected by the conflict.

Additional Information / Sources

[1] "Sep 2, 2019 · In 2013, the United States began a secret operation to train and equip opposition forces fighting against the Assad regime in Syria. Through the CIA, the United States facilitated the transfer of an estimated \$1 billion in arms, ammunition, and training to Syrian rebel groups"

URL: <https://gja.georgetown.edu/2019/09/02/the-arms-trade-and-syria/>

[2] "Aug 6, 2013 · While the United States is not believed to have provided large amounts of weaponry, it has played a role in developing the arms pipeline and in vetting the Syrian groups that receive the weapons. The weapons channels supplying Syria's insurgents comprise a complex, overlapping web of state, non-state and criminal actors."

URL: <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/syria-arms/>

und: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/25/world/middleeast/arms-airlift-to-syrian-rebels-expands-with-cia-aid.html>

[3] "Jun 5, 2013 · In 1919, horrified by the slaughter of the First World War, the newly formed League of Nations tried to restrict and reduce international arms transfers of the type that had led to death and destruction on a massive scale during the war. But those efforts in the 1920s and 1930s to establish a treaty were variously designed on the basis of old ..."

URL: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/06/the-long-journey-towards-an-arms-trade-treaty/>

[4] "The principal difficulty for conflict researchers is gathering reliable data, including from media reports. Given the complexity of the Syrian conflict, media bias in reporting remains a key challenge, plaguing the collection of useful data and misinforming researchers and policymakers regarding the actual events taking place. The seriousness of th... See full list on sipri.org The widespread view that international arms transfers need to be controlled to prevent such transfers from fuelling violence and armed conflict was reaffirmed in 2013 when a large majority of states adopted the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The acceptance of the ATT by most states—or support of at least the ATT's main principles by several others such a... See full list on sipri.org Events in Syria in 2013 will have a long-term—if still somewhat uncertain and controversial—effect on future efforts to respond to allegations of use of chemical weapons. Arms control efforts undertaken in Syria reflected an evolution of international verification measures and activity that encompass both cooperative and coercive elements. Institut... See full list on sipri.org"

URL: <https://sipri.org/yearbook/2014/01>

[5] "Jun 14, 2013 · The UN Security Council's Group of Experts, which monitors the arms embargo imposed on Libya during the 2011 uprising, said in April 2013 that there had been illicit transfers of "heavy and light..."

URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22906965>

[6] "The Arms Trade Treaty obligates member states to monitor arms exports and ensure that weapons don't cross existing arms embargoes or end up being used for human-rights abuses, including terrorism."

URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_Trade_Treaty

[7] "Mar 27, 2013 · 80. At the UN this week, states are deliberating over a proposed Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which would regulate the \$70bn worldwide trade of conventional weapons, from small arms like the ..."

URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/mar/27/arms-trade-treaty-prevent-future-syrias>

[8] "Feb 5, 2021 · European Union (EU) member states have agreed to abide by a set of legally binding instruments established at the regional and international level, such as the 2008 EU Common Position on Arms Exports (EU Common Position) and the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which aim to prevent the adverse impact that a poorly regulated arms trade has on conflict and development, regional security and ..."

URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03932729.2021.1876862>

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