The First Committee: Disarmament and International Security (DISEC)

Honourable delegates,

I would like to welcome you to the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on Disarmament and International Security.

First, a little about myself. My name is Jeff Weaver, and I am looking forward to working with all of you, as the director of this committee. I am a first year Humanities and Social Science student here at the University of Toronto, and I count International Relations (IR), Political Science, Economics, and Philosophy, as some of my academic pursuits. Personally, I find DISEC far more interesting than other committees, like the World Health Organisation and SOCHUM, because we get to deal with more exciting topics, like drone warfare, the arming of revolutions, and the war on drugs. I hope these topics captivate your interest as much as they do mine, and with all luck we will have many long and fruitful debates in February.

As a delegate in this committee, it is your responsibility to stay in accordance with the foreign policy of your country. As director, it is one of my jobs to maintain the academic integrity of the committee. Thus, I have written this guide as a starting point for your research. You should most definitely aim to add more to all I have described for you in this booklet, so that by the first day of the conference you are well rehearsed in the intricacies of each of the topics. Moreover, having a large knowledge base to draw on is key for being successful in your role as a delegate, through applications to resolution writing and debating. Whether you represent a country with a substantial place in the discussion, like Libya, or one with a far more insignificant impact on things, like Luxembourg, you should still strive to take as large a role as you can.

This guide contains brief overview of all three topics that will be discussed in the committee in February. Within each topic, the main issues have been summarised for you, and, in addition, any relevant historical cases have been detailed, for perspective. Furthermore, under each topic are small representations of the policies of the major players, as well as suggestions for further research, and links to more information.

I cannot wait to see all of you in February, and if you have any more questions, please contact me.
Cheers,

Jeff Weaver

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Topic 1: Arming Revolutions

Historical Background and Case Study

There have been various instances of rebels receiving foreign weaponry and military aid for the purpose of furthering their revolutionary goals. The largest purveyor of this kind of aid in the modern era is the United States of America, who used it frequently in their struggle with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The most prominent example of this sort of foreign involvement occurred during the Soviet invasion, and subsequent occupation, of Afghanistan in the late 1970s, and all throughout the next decade. The U.S. Involvement in Afghanistan began with Operation Cyclone, which was the name of a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency program, endorsed by President Jimmy Carter, meant to finance and arm the mujahedeen resistance fighters in their conflict with the Soviet invaders. The program began operation in 1980, with funding of $20-30 million per year, and by the later half of the decade, and support from President Ronald Reagan, it had risen to $630 million. When looking to spend the money, a CIA officer wrote in a classified document "analytically, the best fighters -- the best organized fighters -- were the fundamentalists." The document concluded that the best such fighter was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a member of the mujahedeen who would later join the Taliban, and is still fighting coalition forces in Afghanistan. Many additional costs are not included in this total, such as the proxy funding the States sent to Pakistan, which acted as an intermediary, training, financing, and arming the Afghan fighters. Furthermore, the government of Saudi Arabia made a commitment to match the States' funding dollar-for-dollar, doubling the amount of total aid. Of all the weaponry received by mujahedeen militants, the most effective was the FIM-92 Stinger surface-to-air missile, which received considerable recognition for nullifying the effectiveness of Soviet aircraft.

When Reagan arrived in the oval office, the assistance effort was greatly increased, and even expanded to other areas of the world. This included providing military support to the UNITA group in Angola, and the "contras" in Nicaragua. The situation in Afghanistan, however, is the most notable, as it is a quintessential case of how arming a rebel group can lead to massive fallouts, and further issues. The United States ceased aiding the mujahedeen after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, but advanced weapons still remained in the hands of radical groups. The groups began to fight amongst each other, and as their relationship with their sponsor, the States, soured, the situation deteriorated further, and a civil war broke out. The U.S. Attempted to institute buyback programs to retrieve deadly weapons from the rebels that had previously been quasi-allies, but they weren't completely effective. As time passed, some of the rebels armed by the Americans joined terrorist organisations, like Al-Qaida. The U.S. Foreign policy in this period has been documented as being substantially responsible for causing the chain of events that lead to the September 11th attacks, as Al-Qaida was founded with weaponry and finances stemming from U.S. Support in Afghanistan. This type of effect, the unintended consequence of having a given weapon turned on a sponsor, is commonly called a "blowback".

Modern Applications and Key Questions

The previously detailed instance of military aid is not the only controversial one. U.S. Sponsored anti-communist efforts in Argentina and Honduras led to the direct training of rebel groups and soldiers that directly morphed into death squads. Assistance in Chile resulted in Augusto Pinochet's military coup, and later finished with his arrest for torture and mass murder. The American government even tacitly approved Chinese funding of the Khmer Rouge, an infamous group known for their genocide of 2 million Cambodians. Despite having the most history in this area, the United States of America is not the only country to resort to the military support of rebels. The British did it during World War One, in the Arabian Peninsula, and many other countries did it during the Cold War. Nowadays, though, the topic focuses mainly upon the "Arab spring", and related events, most notably in Libya and Syria. The provision of military support seems to only be effective in creating violence and instability.

This leads to a couple of key questions. To what extent can one country arm another? Also, if arming is legitimate, under what circumstance? The conditions in Syria are very complicated. In both countries, it is believed that state-sponsored atrocities have occurred, which invokes the United Nation's responsibility to protect initiative. This initiative says that the state has a responsibility to protect its citizens from mass atrocities, and if it fails in doing so, the international community has the responsibility to intervene through coercive measures. This can be seen as one rationale for arming revolutions. However, not all members of the UN agree on who to sponsor. According to numerous reports, Syrian rebels are receiving arms from Qatar and Saudi Arabia, through the tacit support of Turkey, while Assad's regime is supported with weapons from Russia and Iran. The United States, meanwhile, remains reluctant to arm groups in Syria, as a result of experiences from Afghanistan, because many of them are fairly staunch Islamists, in a similar way to the members of the mujahedeen. Matters become even more complicated, taking into account the further distribution of weapons to Palestinian refugees by Syrian rebels. In Egypt, the general feeling is that they are not pleased with Assad's crackdown, but are too busy dealing with their own revolution to become more involved. Israel, however, has publicly condemned the Syrian government, and called for the removal of Assad. The largest western powers to propose the arming of Syrian rebels are the United Kingdom and France, who lead a contingent in the European Union calling for the relaxation of several arms embargoes.

This brings us back to the greater issue; under what circumstances should one country arm another? As evidenced by the situation in Syria, there are many reasons that countries do arm rebels or each other, but it is not clear, as of yet, which reasons should be condoned. Should the responsibility to protect initiative be followed, allowing for the arming of revolutions only in the case of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing? Or, should the wider policy of arming political allies or satellite states, be allowed – similar to the United States in Afghanistan, or Iran in Syria? And furthermore, what sort of limit should be placed upon this armament? Lastly, it should also be emphasised that the mandate of this committee is *disarmament*, not armament. These questions will be further debated in the committee.

Suggestions for further reading:

http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-considers-directly-arming-syrian-rebels/5313524

http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/syrian-rebels-seek-military-assistance-from-wary-western-countries/article6281788/

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/06/world/africa/weapons-sent-to-libyan-rebels-with-us-approval-fell-into-islamist-hands.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/19/us-syria-crisis-un-idUSBRE8BI19R20121219

Topic 2: The War on Drugs

History

The "War on Drugs", as it is known in the press, was a term used first by Richard Nixon, president of the United States of America, in 1971. The term's inception was caused by the circulation of reports about growing heroin and marijuana epidemics among members of the U.S. military stationed in Vietnam. Two years later, in 1973, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs was dismantled, and replaced by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). To improve upon this, and maintain his chosen public image, Nixon facilitated the organisation of many drug raids throughout the U.S. The War on Drugs was further augmented in the 1980s, by President Ronald Reagan. In this next decade, however, the focus shifted to cocaine, and especially the crack variety. The most infamous drug related news maker of the eighties was the death of Len Bias. Bias had been a U.S. College basketball star at the University of Maryland. In the 1986 National Basketball Association draft, he was taken 2nd overall, by the Boston Celtics. Two days later, however, he died of a cocaine overdose. Reagan used the coverage surrounding this incident to pass the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which increased funding to the War on Drugs. Tales of "crack babies" became widespread, and, in the same year, Time labelled "crack" the issue of the year. Reagan's successors in the oval office maintained the drug war, all the way up to Barack Obama.

Now, after covered many U.S. Domestic issues, the international side of things,. Most of the following examples of intervention, nevertheless, revolve around the United States. In 1989, the United States initiated Operation Just Cause, an invasion of Panama, to capture General Manuel Noriega, the head of that country's government. The States had known about Noriega's drug trafficking since the 1960s, but they had taken no action, as he was helping them give military assistance to the Contras in Nicaragua (see Topic 1, Arming Revolutions). When the CIA's links to Noriega were revealed, the U.S. condoned his indictment by the DEA, and took measures to have it succeed. Additionally, in South America, The American Plan Colombia program provides that country with millions of dollars of military aid, to help it in its conflict with guerrilla groups suspected of being involved in drug trafficking. There is a certain level of controversy in these efforts, as many of the US trained personnel have gone on to be involved in events highlighted by the Human Rights Watch, like the 2001 Alto Naya Massacre. Lastly, the Merida Initiative between the United States and Mexico provides the latter with $1.4 billion worth of training and equipment for law enforcement and the military. The U.S also provided training for the purpose of strengthening the Mexican justice system. These are only some of the more notable actions taken to combat drug trafficking worldwide.

Policies and Key Questions

The countries most concerned about the War on Drugs, in its most commonly used sense, are those in the Americas. The key players are the United States of America, Mexico, most of Central America, and

the northern most portions of South America, like Colombia. The United States, as shown by the history outlined previously, generally takes a hard-line stance on the War on Drugs, on multiple occasions using military intervention. The United States is also willing to provide aid and monetary support to those countries it sees fit. Mexico has been involved in its own domestic drug war since 2006, and is bitterly engaged with many large drug cartels operating within its borders. And so, the Mexican government condones the use of military force to deter and break down drug related operations. With regards to this issue, the government of Colombia also acts along lines similar to those of Mexico.

United Nations conventions in 1961, 1971, and 1988, all were aimed towards prohibiting the production and supply of various harmful drugs, and many of the ideas detailed within have been incorporated into the domestic policies of participating parties. Through five decades of international policing, the War on Drugs has still not ended. A particularly harsh assessment of this situation was written by the Global Commission on Drug Policy in a 2011 report. The report opened with the line "The global war on drugs has failed, with devastating consequences for individuals and societies around the world". Illustrious members of the GCDP board included Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, and former presidents of Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Poland, and Switzerland. The report brings to light major questions about the War on Drugs. Have international conventions and policing been successful? Should military intervention be used, to what extent, and under what rules? These questions will be investigated in more detail in February.

Suggestions for further reading:

http://www.thedialogue.org/page.cfm?pageID=32&pubID=2790

http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2075679,00.html#ixzz1OFcjiQdf

http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/dec/19/mexico-government-condemns-calderon-war-drugs

http://www.globalcommissionondrugs.org/reports/

Topic 3: Drone Warfare

"The US policy of using aerial drones to carry out targeted killings presents a major challenge to the system of international law that has endured since the Second World War", a United Nations investigator has said. However, the re-elected U.S. president, Barack Obama has defended the use of unmanned drone aircraft to kill "people who are on a list of active terrorists". As the UN investigates the civilian deaths from the U.S. drone strikes, where more than 2,200 people are estimated to have been killed by drones during the three years of the Obama administration in Pakistan alone, the debate on the morality of drone warfare intensifies. It surrounds the risk of using drones, versus the safety of not having troops in actual combat.

Drones (also known as unmanned aerial vehicles) are equipped for military purposes, being for offensive, defensive or recon uses. They are controlled from afar through computers in a vehicle, and are supposed to be utilized "ethically and morally". Drones are said to be precise, resulting in fewer unintended deaths of civilian bystanders, and also offer superior protection to their operators than other weapons.

Some countries feel that drones are inevitable weapons of future warfare, in that they end wars quicker and more effectively. The precision of drone strikes reduces casualties, whether the military using them cares more about their public relations image, or the lives of the soldiers themselves. Drones can perform covert attacks, thus enhancing their tactical superiority.

On the other hand, if a nation is fielding mostly drone forces, and they start doing badly, the sheer financial burden could accelerate easily out of control, leading to potential costs. Another disadvantage to consider is the dehumanizing factor, where in such a culture, it would be easy for the government to make it more about their score than the honour of fighting for your country.

Naturally, Pakistan was the only foreign country in a recent BBC poll that preferred Romney to Obama. This is because of the Drone War. Drones are particularly dangerous instruments, as they allow a president to pick war at will, and placate the public with no military casualties.17 of 20 countries disapproved of the Drone War (the exceptions, unsurprisingly, being the United States, Britain, and India).

Under the UN Charter, states cannot use force against another state or non-state actors abroad unless they act in self-defense or obtain that government's consent. The Pakistani government has not sanctioned the drone strikes publicly, while the United States claims self-defense against Taliban and al-Qaeda militants. Thus, the legality of the US drone warfare is questionable.

International law requires that in armed conflict, civilians cannot be targeted, and incidental civilian harm must be proportional to the expected military gains. Targeting non-combatants— including aid

workers and mourners at funerals—is a blatant war crime. Also concerns about sovereignty were brought up, as the United States is invading Pakistani airspace and carrying out military operations within its borders.

Obama claims that the drone war has a positive effect, and his administration states that almost no civilians have been harmed in the strikes. "All "military-age males" in a strike zone are counted as combatants unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent." Nevertheless, there is little to no evidence that the administration even investigates the background of the people it targets, and instead has attempted to discredit journalists and researchers trying to uncover the actual civilian suffering caused by the Drone War. Studies show that only two percent of those killed by US drone strikes in Pakistan have been terrorist leaders, and that drones are terrorizing Pakistani civilians and breeding anti-Americanism.

The Disarmament and international security committee (DISEC)'s purpose within the MUN is to foster international peace and security. Via an effort to address some of the important questions that have been raised regarding drone warfare, DISEC plays a considerable role in the vision for global peace.