



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 30, 2012

UN Conference Fails to Agree to Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

The month-long United Nations conference to draw up a global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) [failed](#) to achieve consensus after the United States, Russia, and China requested more time to consider a draft treaty, [according](#) to the United Nations. The [draft treaty](#), which would have required national gun registration, required unanimity among the nations assembled in order to advance.

“I am disappointed that the Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) concluded its four-week-long session without agreement on a treaty text that would have set common standards to regulate the international trade in conventional arms,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [said](#). Ban termed the lack of agreement a “setback.” Ban said that the UN’s commitment to signing “a robust ATT is steadfast” and that the global body would continue to work toward what he termed “a noble goal.”

[Proponents](#) of the global gun control measure argued that the ATT draft treaty would not have impacted private firearms ownership in the United States under the Second Amendment, as the treaty was nominally directed to international transfer of firearms. Of course, assurances that gun ownership will not be impacted by the UN treaty fell on deaf ears to the [National Rifle Association](#) and other supporters of the Second Amendment. While [draft versions](#) of the ATT did not explicitly call for the ban on privately held firearms, they did call for national gun registration and vague “control” measures that could be implied to include gun collection. From an administration that recently [argued in court](#) that not purchasing health insurance constituted interstate “commerce” that Congress can regulate under the Constitution, gun owners were not about to give the federal government a loophole that allowed for confiscation of firearms — even an improbable loophole.

Moreover, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sold the idea of a gun treaty to enhance the prestige and power of the United Nations. “A strong treaty would rid the world of the appalling human cost of the poorly regulated international arms trade,” the Secretary-General [said](#). “It would also enhance the ability of the United Nations to cope with the proliferation of arms.”

The Obama administration had reversed a U.S. vote at the UN in 2006 (under the Bush administration) against an ATT on condition that the ATT be unanimously adopted. The Obama administration’s ambassador even delivered a [July 12 speech](#) at the convention in support of the agreement, but after the draft treaty was released, the Obama administration asked for more time to consider the treaty, effectively killing the agreement.

Anti-gun organizations were crestfallen, and blamed the Obama administration for caving to domestic political pressure as the reason for the ATT conference failure. Scott Stedjan, senior policy advisor at Oxfam America [said](#):





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Today the United States did not grab the golden ring: an international arms treaty that would have bolstered our country's reputation as a leader on human rights. The White House's failure of courage to press this treaty to conclusion today and is a loss for hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians that die each year from armed violence fueled by the unregulated transfer of arms. Moving forward President Obama must show the political courage required to make a strong treaty that contains strong rules on human rights a reality. It was this courage that was missing from this week.



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