Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madame Secretary:

This summer, the United States will be afforded a critical opportunity to help reduce the international transfer of small arms and light weapons (SALW) to deadly conflict zones and terrorist organizations. The United Nations will meet in New York from June 26-July 7 to review the implementation of the Program of Action (PoA) to combat the proliferation of SALW. We encourage you to use this opportunity to support the addition of strict guidelines on international SALW transfers.

The easy availability of SALW in the post-Cold War era–particularly assault rifles and shoulder-fired missiles–threatens U.S. security interests and the lives of millions throughout the world. While the United States strictly regulates the international transfer of arms, many governments have weak or non-existent controls. The lack of controls has taken a tremendous human toll on those in areas most affected by armed violence. For example, thousands of SALW were transferred to Sudan in 2002 and 2003 from several countries in the Middle East and Asia despite arms embargoes imposed on Sudan by the United States and the European Union. The current violence and displacement in the Darfur region of Sudan has been fueled in part by easy access to SALW through these irresponsible arms transfers.

While there are several multilateral and regional agreements guiding the international transfer of SALW, these agreements contain either varied or conflicting provisions. Many governments, especially in Asia and the Middle East, have not agreed to any regional or multilateral agreement. The U.S. has prudently supported strict SALW transfer standards in the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe, among others. Yet, the continued grave human impacts caused by the failure of some governments to transfer SALW responsibly make it necessary to push for strict global standards at the United Nations that leave less room for ambiguity.

For the PoA to be most effective, it must define strict, clear guidelines for international SALW transfers. We encourage you to push for strict guidelines—modeled on the United States' own strong arms transfer laws and policies—that would prevent: 1) SALW transfers that are likely to violate international or regional treaties, including arms embargoes; 2) SALW transfers that are likely to be used for terrorism and gross human

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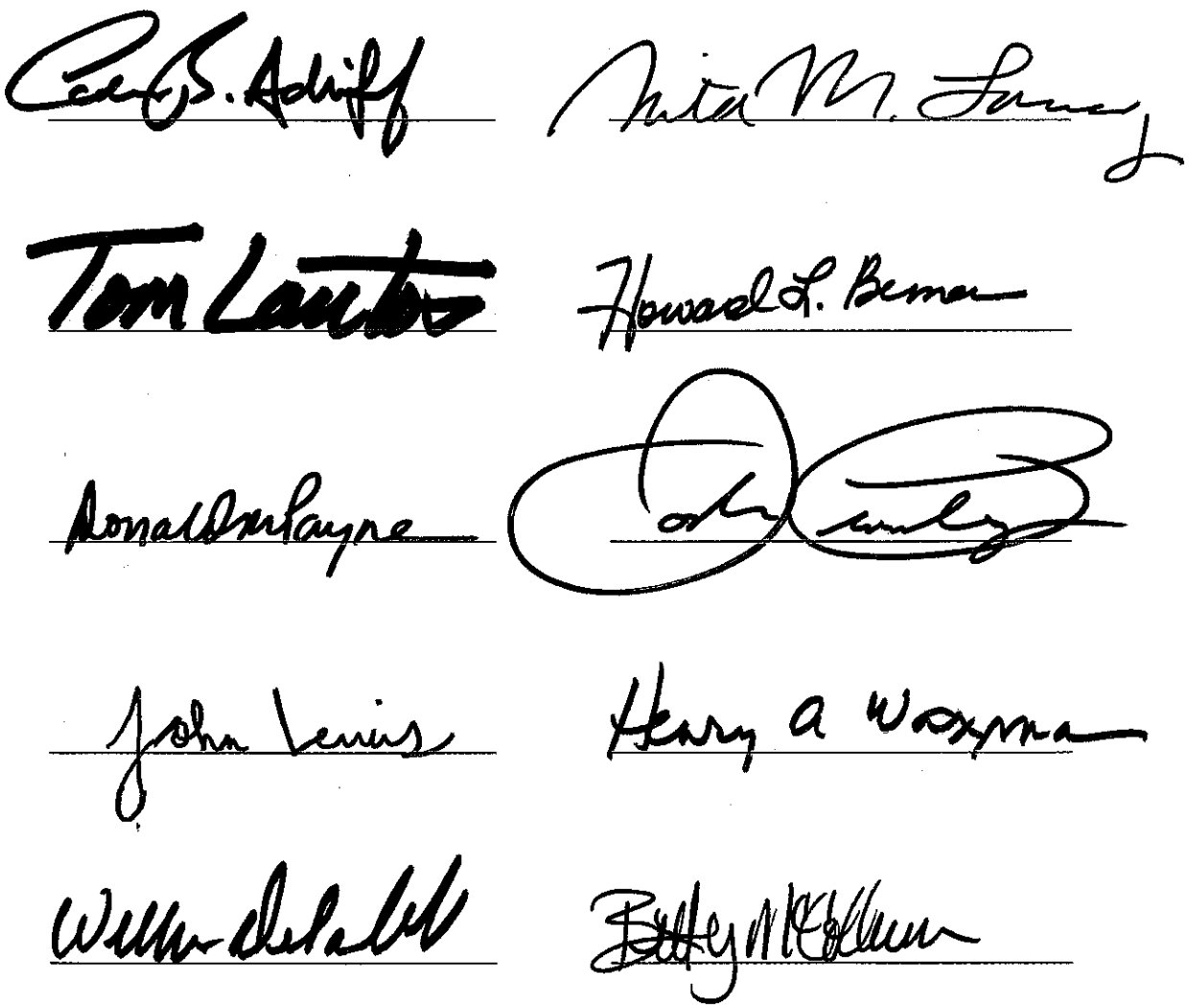
rights violations; 3) SALW transfers that will negatively affect internal or regional peace and security; and, 4) SALW transfers that can be diverted for any of the above purposes.

We urge you to take full advantage of this opportunity to further U.S. interests and security by strengthening international SALW transfer guidelines at the 2006 Review Conference on the U.N. Program of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



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