



# Conclusion

“Just as Pearl Harbor awakened this country from the notion that we could somehow avoid the call to duty and defend freedom in Europe and Asia in World War II, so, too, should this most recent surprise attack erase the concept in some quarters that America can somehow go it alone in the fight against terrorism, or in anything else, for that matter.”<sup>126</sup>

—GEORGE HERBERT WALKER BUSH  
September 14th, 2001

As former President Bush notes in the quote above, US security is inextricably intertwined with that of the rest of the world. What he fails to note is that twenty-first century threats to American lives and interests differ fundamentally from those of past eras. The German, Japanese and Soviet menaces of the 20th century have been replaced by a global criminal superstructure that evolves constantly to exploit new opportunities. There will be no decisive, pitched battle against this foe; the war against terrorism and its supporting infrastructure will be a perpetual war of attrition fought simultaneously on many different levels and on many different fronts. Waging this war successfully will require the United States to coordinate its actions with many governments, a task that is made easier by international instruments like the OAS Firearms Convention.

Small arms are too pernicious and resilient a scourge to eradicate with a single treatment. Over time and in combination with other initiatives, however, the Convention can play an invaluable role in establishing and implementing an effective hemispheric strategy to control the illicit trade in firearms, and dismantle the infrastructure that supports that trade. Realizing the full potential of the Convention requires the support of the major players in the Western Hemi-

sphere, especially the United States. Ratification requires few if any changes to US regulations and practices, and poses no threat to lawful gun ownership. Costs, in terms of dollars and staff time, are negligible, and the benefits — fewer illicit weapons in the hemisphere and the international goodwill generated by US support of a popular multilateral agreement — are immense. For these reasons, the US should immediately ratify the OAS Firearms Convention.