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High Rate of Gun-Related Murders in Guyana Leads to Assistance From European Union

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GEORGETOWN, Guyana CMC – Guyana is receiving assistance from the European Union (EU) for the full implementation of the global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which came into force in 2014.

Public Security Minister, Khemraj Ramjattan, addressing the opening of a two-day workshop here Wednesday, said Guyana was in a geopolitical space with the highest rate of gun violence in the world.

He told the workshop that neighbouring Brazil has an annual murder tally of 56,000 while Jamaica's annual murder rate is about 56 per 100,000.

In other Caribbean countries such as St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines it is 32 per 100,000 annually, while in Guyana, which Ramjattan described as 15 too many, the rate is 15 per 100,000.

“It is important in that context that we understand the position and location that we are to make sure that these seminars can be of benefit to us to help ultimately that outcome better rates than these very high rates. More work, as it relates to how we deal with the trade of arms and how we prevent unauthorised end-users and that will help to curb that very high rate.”

The ATT is the only binding treaty governing arms transfers worldwide and has provisions to help bring countries like Guyana on par with international best practices.

Ramjattan noted that Guyana was not an exporter but an importer of arms, some of which come illegally from neighbouring Brazil and Venezuela.

“We have heard of situations where some across the border with Venezuela have been selling guns for food.

“We have to ensure that ... we get as much expertise from the European Union and it is important that we utilise these opportunities when we have them coming and wanting to assist so that our system will not be stretched and strained to the extent that it is having now,” the Public Security Minister said.

The workshop is being attended by public security officials as well as representatives from the ministries of foreign affairs, business, and legal affairs, the army, and the Guyana Revenue Authority.