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George Thayer

**ARMS DEALER SAM**

*How surplus weapons, international suppliers, and an eager clientele turned an ambitious American boy into a full-grown millionaire.*

P-Thayer, George  
 5004.012 The War Business

C.A. 1104 Cummings, Samuel

Orig - Interarms Co

C.A. 4 - Guatemala  
 C.A. 4 - Cuba

Orig under Cummings

Sometime in the early 1950s, a sales brochure published by a little-known company called Interarms offered to the American public a handsome and fascinating variety of its wares: armaments. As if aware that such offerings might be of odd interest to the average outdoorsman or homeowner, the brochure-writer permitted himself a certain degree of high spirits. "Why Be Undergunned?" asks one advertisement, and announces the availability of a number of Finnish Lahti 20 mm anti-tank cannon. A Soviet mortar is described as "the ultimate attraction for you smooth bore fanatics," and a bazooka, as the perfect weapon to "get those charging woodchucks."

Interarms, whose proper name is the International Armament Corporation, at present maintains in Alexandria, Virginia, ten large warehouses which may at any one time hold from 500,000 to 600,000 surplus small-caliber weapons, usually up to 20 mm in size—enough, according to Samuel Cummings, Interarms' president, "for about forty infantry divisions." An additional 150,000 to 200,000 weapons of similar type comprise the stock of another large warehouse maintained by the company in Acton, a suburb of London. Indeed, Cummings claims to have more surplus weapons in stock than the military forces of either the United States or Britain currently have in active service.

Interarms of course is not exclusively or even primarily involved in supplying intrepid private individuals with recreational equipment. Since the end of World War II there have in fact been very few independent arms deals in the world in which Samuel Cummings has not been involved. He has managed in the last two decades, for instance, to buy up approximately 90 per cent of all the British surplus small arms for sale.

He once paid one million dollars for Spain's entire surplus...

...sold Austria all the ordnance it needed to equip its border police. He bought 300,000 surplus arms and seventy million rounds of ammunition from Finland; this purchase was so large that it took three years to ship to the United States. He almost bought from Chile the last surviving warship from the Battle of Jutland, but a Japanese group outbid him at the last moment. He helped rearm West Germany by selling it MG-42 machine guns that the Dutch had captured from the Wehrmacht. In one transaction, he bought 600,000 Lee-Enfield rifles, some of them for as little as 28 cents apiece and subsequently sold many of them in the United States for as much as \$24.95.

In 1955 he supplied arms to the Costa Rican government of José Figueres. He also sold arms to Nicaragua, which was at the time supporting a group of Costa Rican rebels opposed to the Figueres regime. The following year he bought 2,000 small arms that had been captured by the Israelis from the Egyptians in the Suez campaign. The weapons were predominantly Russian in origin, purchased by the Egyptians from the Czechs, who previously had acquired them from the Soviets. Most of these arms, Cummings told me, "now hang over the fireplaces in American homes."

He sold Trujillo twenty-six Vampire jets that had seen service in the Swedish Air Force, and a few years later he sold Venezuela seventy-four F-86 Sabrejets that were Luftwaffe castoffs. For many years he was a major supplier of arms to Batista. Later, he sold Castro a batch of AR-10 rifles—as he did 75,000 Sten guns to Finland, 500,000 FN rifles to Argentina, 2,000 Springfield rifles with extra-long chrome-plated bayonets to Liberia, 50,000 Lee-Enfields to Pakistan's border patrol, and a quantity of the same make of rifle to Kenya to fight the Mau Mau. He has even supplied arms to the... with pennants,