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The White House

January 15, 2014

Presidential Policy Directive -- United States Conventional Arms Transfer Policy

PRESIDENTIAL POLICY DIRECTIVE/PPD-27

SUBJECT: United States Conventional Arms Transfer Policy

Conventional weapons have continued to play a decisive role in armed conflict in the early 21st century and will remain legitimate instruments for the defense and security policy of responsible nations for the foreseeable future. In the hands of hostile or irresponsible state and non-state actors, however, these weapons can exacerbate international tensions, foster instability, inflict substantial damage, enable transnational organized crime, and be used to violate universal human rights. Therefore, global conventional arms transfer patterns have significant implications for U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, and the U.S. policy for conventional arms transfer has an important role in shaping the international security environment.

United States conventional arms transfer policy supports transfers that meet legitimate security requirements of our allies and partners in support of our national security and foreign policy interests. At the same time, the policy promotes restraint, both by the United States and other suppliers, in transfers of weapons systems that may be destabilizing or dangerous to international peace and security.

Goals of U.S. Conventional Arms Transfer Policy

United States conventional arms transfer policy serves the following U.S. national security and foreign policy goals:

1. Ensuring U.S. military forces, and those of allies and partners, continue to enjoy technological superiority over potential adversaries.
2. Promoting the acquisition of U.S. systems to increase interoperability with allies and partners, lower the unit costs for all, and strengthen the industrial base.
3. Enhancing the ability of allies and partners to deter or defend themselves against aggression.

4. Encouraging the maintenance and expansion of U.S. security partnerships with those who share our interests, and regional access in areas critical to U.S. interests.
5. Promoting regional stability, peaceful conflict resolution, and arms control.
6. Preventing the proliferation of conventional weapons that could be used as delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction.
7. Promoting cooperative counterterrorism, critical infrastructure protection, and other homeland security priorities.
8. Combating transnational organized crime and related threats to national security.
9. Supporting democratic governance and other related U.S. foreign policy objectives.
10. Ensuring that arms transfers do not contribute to human rights violations or violations of international humanitarian law.

Process and Criteria Guiding U.S. Arms Transfer Decisions

Arms transfer decisions will continue to meet the requirements of applicable statutes such as the Arms Export Control Act, the Foreign Assistance Act, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, and the annual National Defense Authorization Act, as well as the requirements of all applicable export control regulations and of U.S. international commitments.

All arms transfer decisions will be guided by a set of criteria that maintains the appropriate balance between legitimate arms transfers to support U.S. national security and that of our allies and partners, and the need for restraint against the transfer of arms that would enhance the military capabilities of hostile states, serve to facilitate human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law, or otherwise undermine international security. This includes decisions involving the transfer of defense articles, related technical data, and defense services through direct commercial sales, government-to-government transfers, transfers of arms pursuant to U.S. assistance programs, approvals for the retransfer of arms, changes of end-use, and upgrades. More specifically, all arms transfer decisions will be consistent with relevant domestic law and international commitments and obligations, and will take into account the following criteria:

- Appropriateness of the transfer in responding to legitimate U.S. and recipient security needs.

- Consistency with U.S. regional stability interests, especially when considering transfers involving power projection capability, anti-access and area denial capability, or introduction of a system that may foster increased tension or contribute to an arms race.
- The impact of the proposed transfer on U.S. capabilities and technological advantage, particularly in protecting sensitive software and hardware design, development, manufacturing, and integration knowledge.
- The degree of protection afforded by the recipient country to sensitive technology and potential for unauthorized third-party transfer, as well as in-country diversion to unauthorized uses.
- The risk of revealing system vulnerabilities and adversely affecting U.S. operational capabilities in the event of compromise.
- The risk that significant change in the political or security situation of the recipient country could lead to inappropriate end-use or transfer of defense articles.
- The degree to which the transfer supports U.S. strategic, foreign policy, and defense interests through increased access and influence, allied burden sharing, and interoperability.
- The human rights, democratization, counterterrorism, counterproliferation, and nonproliferation record of the recipient, and the potential for misuse of the export in question.
- The likelihood that the recipient would use the arms to commit human rights abuses or serious violations of international humanitarian law, retransfer the arms to those who would commit human rights abuses or serious violations of international humanitarian law, or identify the United States with human rights abuses or serious violations of international humanitarian law.
- The impact on U.S. industry and the defense industrial base, whether or not the transfer is approved.
- The availability of comparable systems from foreign suppliers.
- The ability of the recipient to field effectively, support, and appropriately employ the requested system in accordance with its intended end-use.
- The risk of adverse economic, political, or social impact within the recipient nation and the degree to which security needs can be addressed by other means.

Supporting Arms Control and Arms Transfer Restraint

A critical element of U.S. conventional arms transfer policy is to promote control, restraint, and transparency of arms transfers. The United States will continue its participation in the U.N. Register of Conventional Arms and the U.N. Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Spending, in the absence of an international legally binding treaty that requires such transparency measures. The United States will continue to urge universal participation in the U.N. Register and encourage states reporting to the Register to include military holdings, procurement through national production, and model or type information for

transfers, thereby providing a more complete picture of change in a nation's military capabilities each year. The United States will also continue to examine the scope of items covered under the Register to ensure it meets current U.S. national security concerns. Additionally, the United States will support regional initiatives to enhance transparency in conventional arms.

The United States will continue its participation in the Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, which began operations in 1996 and is designed to prevent destabilizing accumulations of conventional arms and related dual-use goods and technologies. By encouraging transparency, consultation, and, where appropriate, national policies of restraint, the Arrangement fosters greater responsibility and accountability in transfers of arms and dual-use goods and technologies. We will continue to use the Wassenaar Arrangement to promote shared national policies of restraint against the acquisition of armaments and sensitive dual-use goods and technologies for military end-uses by states whose behavior is a cause for serious concern.

The United States will also continue vigorous support for current arms control and confidence-building efforts to constrain the demand for destabilizing weapons and related technology. The United States recognizes that such efforts bolster stability in a variety of ways, ultimately decreasing the demand for arms.

The United States will not authorize any transfer if it has actual knowledge at the time of authorization that the transferred arms will be used to commit: genocide; crimes against humanity; grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949; serious violations of Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949; attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians who are legally protected from attack or other war crimes as defined in 18 U.S.C. 2441.

Also, the United States will exercise unilateral restraint in the export of arms in cases where such restraint will be effective or is necessitated by overriding national interests. Such restraint will be considered on a case-by-case basis in transfers involving states whose behavior is a cause for serious concern, where the United States has a substantial lead in weapon technology, where the United States restricts exports to preserve its military edge or regional stability, where the United States has no fielded countermeasures, or where the transfer of weapons raises concerns about undermining international peace and security, serious violations of human rights law, including serious acts of gender-based violence and serious acts of violence against women and children, serious violations of international humanitarian law, terrorism, transnational organized crime, or indiscriminate use.

Finally, the United States will work bilaterally and multilaterally to assist other suppliers in developing effective export control mechanisms to support responsible export control policies.

Supporting Responsible U.S. Transfers

The United States Government will provide support for proposed U.S. exports that are consistent with this policy. This support will include, as appropriate, such steps as: tasking our overseas mission personnel to support overseas marketing efforts of U.S. companies bidding on defense contracts; actively involving senior government officials in promoting transfers that are of particular importance to the United States; and supporting official Department of Defense participation in international air and trade exhibitions when the Secretary of Defense, in accordance with existing law, determines such participation to be in the national interest and notifies the Congress. The United States will also continue to pursue efforts to streamline security cooperation with our allies and partners, and in the conduct of conventional arms transfer policy and security cooperation policy, the United States Government will take all available steps to hasten the ultimate provision of conventional arms and security assistance.

This Directive supersedes [Presidential Decision Directive/ NSC-34](#), dated February 10, 1995.

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Source: [The White House](#)