



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

March 2011

Kate Allen
Amnesty International
1 Easton Street
London
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Dear Kate,

Thank you for Amnesty International's latest campaign on the Arms Trade Treaty and the unfolding events in Libya and the wider region. I am replying as Minister responsible for the UK's arms export policy at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I would be grateful if you could arrange for this response to be placed on your website so that your members can view it.

The UK already has one of the most rigorous and transparent arms export control systems in the world, whereby all export licence applications are accessed on a case by case basis, against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Exports Licensing Criteria, (Consolidated Criteria). These were approved by Parliament in 2002. The extent to which applications are refused or approved is determined by assessing the circumstances at the time of the application.

In the case of Libya decisions on the export of military and security-related goods and technology were made in the past in the light of circumstances at the time, and reflected a different situation to that which is evident at present. Of course circumstances can and do change, often quickly and without notice. If circumstances deteriorate on the ground, this is reflected directly in the risk assessment process we use to decide whether to authorise an export.

The Consolidated Criteria make clear our commitment to assess the risk of exports being used for internal repression or to provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing tensions or conflict in the country of final destination. A licence will not be issued for a



particular export where to do so would be inconsistent with the Criteria or other relevant commitments. You may wish to view data on Strategic Export Licences on the Reports and Statistics website at www.exportcontroldb.berr.gov.uk/eng/fox.

A UN arms embargo has been in place on Libya since 26 February, when UN Security Council Resolution 1970 was adopted. At that time, the UK had already revoked export licences to Libya covering military and security-related goods and technology, and moved to a policy of refusing all future applications for military or security-related goods and technology which could be used for internal repression.

Additionally, the Foreign Secretary has announced that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will review the sale of weapons to Middle East countries that could be used for internal repression. This review will focus specifically on our approach to exporting crowd control goods.

The UK will continue to play a leading role in the UN Process on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), and participated actively in the Preparatory Committee meeting in New York from 28 February to 4 March 2011. Good progress was made at the meeting, which built upon the outcomes from the successful start to negotiations last year. The UK is firmly committed to raising the standard of global arms export controls and the ATT is a crucial opportunity to do this.

I hope that this response reassures you that the Government takes very seriously its commitment to ensuring that the UK's trade in military listed equipment is carried out in a responsible manner, and that we remain committed to securing a robust and effective ATT, that helps to prevent arms being used in violation of human rights.

Yours sincerely
Alic Burt

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