

MEDIA RELEASE
BY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE (CDA)

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CDP kwaai oor SA-wapenverkope

“Die ou politiek-wetenskaplike gesegde stel dit dat lande in die internasionale politiek nie vriende het nie, net belange. Met die ANC se bewindsaanvaarding is grootliks van hierdie konsep afgestap, en is vriendskapsbande dikwels weens historiese bande gehandhaaf – dikwels met van die wêreld se bekendste muishondlande soos Libië en Kuba. Dit het selfs tydens SA se roterende voorsitterskap van die VN se Veiligheidsraad verleentheid veroorsaak deur vir die bewind in Mynamar en Soedan in die bresse te tree.” So sê die leier van die Christen-Demokratiese Party (CDP) en wnde voorsitter van die Christen Demokratiese Alliansie (CDA), ds. Theunis Botha.

“Of die onthullings oor lande aan wie SA die afgelope tien jaar wapens verkoop het, aan misplaaste solidariteit of gewoon onnodige landmyn-afrappery op die internasionale toneel te wyte is, is moeilik om te sê. Suid-Afrika moet kennis neem dat daar ‘n toenemende wêreldwye besef is dat moraliteit nie maar klakkeloos deur belange onder die mat ingevee kan word nie. Volgens die Ceasefire Campaign het Suid-Afrika tussen 2000 en 2009 wapens aan 58 bedenklieke lande verkoop.”

“Die verkoop van wapens aan korrupte diktature is nie maar net nog ‘n sinnelose diplomatieke flater soos om pres. Robert Mugabe na die amptelike opening van die Wêreldbekersokkertoernooi te nooi nie. Wanneer wapens eers in die hande van tiranne, dwelmkartelle en terroristegroepe kom is dit moeilik om te sien hoe die land se belange in enige opsig gedien word.”

CDP angered by arms sales

“It is often said in international politics, that countries do not have friends, they simply have interests. With the ANC's coming to power, this idea was to a large extent left aside, with the country befriending friends from the struggle era, including some of the world's most infamous skunk countries such as Libya and Cuba. South Africa even had egg in the face whilst chairing the UN's Security Council by taking pro Myanmar and Sudan stances.” So says Christian Democratic Party (CDP) leader and acting chair of the Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA), Rev. Theunis Botha.

“Whether the revelation of which countries South Africa to had been selling weapons over the past decade simply relates to inappropriate solidarity or pig headed treading on an international mine field, is not easy to understand. South Africa needs to take note that international awareness on morality is growing, and so also the awareness that morality can not simply be swept aside for the benefit of questionable interests. According to the Ceasefire Campaign, South Africa had been selling weapons to 58 disreputable countries between 2000 and 2009.”

“Selling weapons to corrupt dictatorships is not simply another diplomatic blunder such as inviting Pres. Robert Mugabe to the opening ceremony of the SWC tournament. When firearms and munitions are reaching corrupt dictatorships, drug cartels or terrorists, it becomes very hard indeed to see how any country's interest could be served in that way.”

SA selling arms to 'dodgy' states

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Johannesburg - South Africa has sold R13.2bn worth of highly dangerous weapons to "problematic" countries in the past decade, the Ceasefire Campaign said on Tuesday.

"Arms are not potatoes. The reason we have an act is because they can't be sold like potatoes," said Ceasefire Campaign steering committee member Rob Thomson at a media conference in central Johannesburg. Five of South Africa's top ten arms purchasers - India, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Colombia and Saudi Arabia - do not satisfy the criteria set out in the National Conventional Arms Control Act. The criteria in the act includes if the countries have embargoes against them, if they are violating human rights, if they are involved in regional conflicts and what type of export controls they have. "We should not be selling arms to them in the first place, let alone having them as our major recipients," said Thomson.

According to the Ceasefire Campaign's database, between 2000 and 2009, South Africa had sold weapon equipment to 58 countries that failed on at least one of the criteria. Of the R13.2bn of arms sold to the countries 60% comprised of sensitive weapons, said Thomson. South Africa sold R1.883bn worth of sensitive weapon equipment to India, R1.419bn to the United Arab Emirates and R1.121bn to Algeria.

More to worst countries

Colombia received R1.085bn worth of equipment, while Nigeria got R84m of equipment. "We are selling more arms to the worst countries than to countries that pass the criteria. "More than half of the arms to these failing countries are significant sensitive equipment," said Thomson. "In general, the committee has not even attempted to apply those criteria and is in gross dereliction of its duty to do so".

Thomson also criticised South Africa's arms exports to India, China and Brazil saying they were motivated by not rocking the boat when it came to trade and other agreements between the countries. "We don't want to put India, Brazil or China out....We shouldn't be selling to these countries." Thomson said the Ceasefire Campaign's database on arms exports was made up of information gleaned from the Bonn International Centre for Conversion, parastatal Denel, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons.

Endless delays

South African History Archive (Saha) Freedom of Information Programme Officer Gabriella Razzano outlined the protracted battle it took to get the annual reports of the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NACC) added to this list of sources. She said the Saha and Ceasefire Campaign had sought to access the reports since 2006 but were met with endless delays and sometimes no responses at all from the NACC.

"The path of the requests was a frustrating one" she said.

"Exasperated and fearful of the cost implications of going to court, Saha and Ceasefire decided to settle on what had been released informally out of court," she said, adding this still left the organisations with "significant questions that their silence fails to answer".

"What are they concealing?" Thomson said the actual information they got from the annual reports for 2000 to 2009 - once released - was "bland... as if there are no issues [while] in an area like this there must be problems.

"Even the minimum information is not there," he said.

- SAPA