

Executive Summary

The Democratic Alliance (DA) called this press conference to expose the crisis in our arms control regime and explain its implications.

There is a crisis at the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) which has resulted in a massive backlog of permits awaiting assessment with contracts worth billions of Rands in the arms industry now on hold, and several dodgy deals appear to have slipped through the cracks after the last meeting of the NCACC in May/June 2008

We are concerned here with six countries and three types of deals – namely:

- deals that have been “authorised” by the NCACC;
- deals that are “pending” authorisation by the NCACC; and
- a case of authorisation to exhibit military support equipment in a country of concern.

The dodgy deals that have been “authorized” by the NCACC include:

- selling glide bombs that could be used to deliver nuclear, chemical and biological weapons to Libya;
- selling multiple grenade launchers to Libya;
- selling multiple grenade launchers to Syria; and
- selling thousands of multiple grenade launchers and upgraded assault rifles to Venezuela.

The dodgy deals that are “pending” authorization by the NCACC include:

- attempting to sell thousands of aviator G-suits to Iran;
- attempting to sell thousands of sniper rifles to Syria; and
- attempting to sell millions of rounds of ammunition to Zimbabwe.

The dodgy deals also include authorization by the NCACC to:

- exhibit and demonstrate radar warning receivers for submarines in North Korea.

The DA calls on NCACC chairperson Jeff Radebe to urgently convene a meeting of the new committee in order to:

- investigate the arms deals that have been authorised by the committee in respect of Libya, Syria and Venezuela, and stop the export of weapons systems or military support equipment if it has not already been delivered;
- investigate the arms deals that are pending authorisation by the committee in respect of Iran, Syria, and Zimbabwe, and stop the export of the weapons systems or military support equipment; and
- investigate the issuing of permits to the company that exhibited military support equipment in North Korea

The DA will also call for NCACC chairperson Jeff Radebe, NCACC deputy-chairperson Naledi Pandor and members of the secretariat to appear before the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans to explain what corrective action will be taken at the NCACC.

ARMING DICTATORS ALL OVER THE WORLD

National Conventional Arms Control Committee in crisis

1. Introduction

The Democratic Alliance (DA) produced this document to expose the crisis in our arms control regime and explain its implications. We will share information about arms deals that have been authorised and arms deals that still have to be authorised. We do this because we think it is the right thing to do, and it is in the public interest to disclose this information. What is going on is wrong.

The National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC) was recently appointed and includes:

- Jeff Radebe – Chairperson (Minister of Justice);
- Naledi Pandor – Deputy Chairperson (Minister of Science and Technology);
- Lindiwe Sisulu (Minister of Defence and Military Veterans);
- Nathi Mthethwa (Minister of Police);
- Siyabonga Cwele (Minister of State Security);
- Maite Nkoana-Mashabane (Minister of International Relations);
- Rob Davies (Minister of Trade and Industry);
- Barbara Hogan (Minister of Public Enterprises);
- Thabang Makwetla (Deputy-Minister of Defence and Military Veterans);
- Ismael Ebrahim (Deputy-Minister of International Relations); and
- Nhlanhla Nene (Deputy-Minister of Finance).

The NCACC is an inter-ministerial committee appointed to ensure that we have a legitimate, effective and transparent process for controlling trade in conventional arms. The committee must ensure that arms transfers conform to international law and guiding principles set out in legislation. We should not export conventional arms, according to legislation regulating the NCACC, if there is a chance the arms could:

- contribute to internal repression;
- contribute to the violation of human rights;
- contribute to the violation of fundamental freedoms;
- contribute to the escalation of regional conflicts; or
- contribute to terrorism and/or crime.

We will expose arms deals that have been authorized as well as arms deals that are pending authorisation by the NCACC. We do this because we are concerned that the new NCACC may not step up to the plate and do the right thing. We hope that, by disclosing this information, the new committee will be forced to stop the arms deals pending authorization by the NCACC.

2. NCACC Crisis

2.1. Permit Authorisation

The NCACC last met in May /June 2008 under the chairpersonship of Sydney Mufamadi.

However, since then, permits have been issued and arms deals authorised without proper meetings of the NCACC.

The legislation is clear:

- the NCACC must review each application on a case-by-case basis and authorise or refuse permits; and
- four members of the committee – which must include either the chairperson or the deputy chairperson of the committee – constitute a quorum of the NCACC.

The information at my disposal is that permits have been issued authorising arms deals at meetings of the NCACC without a full quorum. Some arms deals have been authorised by one or two members of the committee, neither of whom were the chairperson or deputy-chairperson of the NCACC. Decisions were effectively being taken and permits issued authorising arms deals by officials.

However, many new permits have not been issued to authorise arms deals because of the long delay in appointing the new NCACC. This has resulted in a massive backlog of applications for permits. The value locked up in the backlog is worth billions of rands. And the arms manufacturing industry is severely prejudiced by this, but companies are too scared to complain for fear of being victimised. Dissenting voices in the arms manufacturing industry are too often accused of trying to “discredit government institutions”, in this case the NCACC.

2.2 Secrecy

The NCACC is required, in terms of legislation, to provide reports to Cabinet, Parliament and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

But the NCACC is a serial defaulter when it comes to producing reports required in terms of the legislation. The committee does not produce quarterly reports and sometimes produces annual reports. The last NCACC annual report was released in 2005 dealing with arms transfers in 2003 and 2004. Parliament received annual reports from the NCACC for 2005 and 2006 but these were marked “Confidential” and “Secret”, completely defeating one of the key aims of the NCACC, which is to promote transparency in respect of the trade in conventional arms.

No reports have been received by parliament for 2007 or 2008 despite a promise in a letter dated 05 March 2008 from Sydney Mufamadi to the then speaker of the National Assembly Baleka Mbete that *“the NCACC will henceforth submit all its required reports to all relevant institutions in good time. Further to this, the reports to be submitted in good time will be classified in a manner that promotes access to such reports.”*