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China: Secretive arms exports stoking conflict and repression

China is fast emerging as one of the world's biggest, most secretive and irresponsible arms exporters, according to a new report issued today by Amnesty International.

The report shows how Chinese weapons have helped sustain brutal conflicts, criminal violence and other grave human rights violations in countries such as Sudan, Nepal, Myanmar and South Africa. It also reveals the possible involvement of Western companies in the manufacture of some of these weapons.

"China describes its approach to arms export licensing as 'cautious and responsible', yet the reality couldn't be further from the truth. China is the only major arms exporting power that has not signed up to any multilateral agreements with criteria to prevent arms exports likely to be used for serious human rights violations," said Helen Hughes, Amnesty International's arms control researcher.

China's arms exports, estimated to be in excess of US\$1 billion a year, often involve the exchange of weapons for raw materials to fuel the country's rapid economic growth. But it is a trade shrouded in secrecy; Beijing does not publish any information about arms transfers abroad and hasn't submitted any data to the UN Register on Conventional Arms in the last eight years.

Amnesty International's report, *China: Sustaining conflict and human rights abuses*, includes several examples of irresponsible Chinese arms exports.

The report's main findings include:

More than 200 Chinese military trucks -- normally fitted with US Cummins diesel engines -- shipped to Sudan in August 2005, despite a US arms embargo on both countries and the involvement of similar vehicles in the killing and abduction of civilians in Darfur;

Regular Chinese military shipments to Myanmar, including the supply in August 2005 of 400 military trucks to the Burmese army despite its involvement in the torture, killing and forced eviction of hundreds of thousands of civilians;

Chinese military exports to Nepal in 2005 and early 2006, including a deal to supply nearly 25 thousand Chinese-made rifles and 18,000 grenades to Nepalese security forces, at the time involved in the brutal repression of thousands of civilian demonstrators;

An increasingly illicit trade in Chinese-made Norinco pistols in Australia, Malaysia, Thailand and particularly South Africa, where they are commonly used for robbery, rape and other crimes.

“As a major arms exporter and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it is high time that the Chinese authorities live up to their obligations under international law. They must introduce effective laws and regulations banning all arms transfers that could be used for serious human rights violations or breaches in international humanitarian law,” said Helen Hughes

Amnesty International is also calling on China to report annually and publicly on all arms export licences and deliveries and to support a tough, comprehensive and enforceable international Arms Trade Treaty.

As long as China continues to allow arms supplies to the perpetrators of gross human rights violations, the international community must redouble its regulation of joint ventures involving military and dual-use technology in China and must strengthen the application of arms embargoes on China such as those imposed by the European Union and the USA.

For after copy of the report, *China: Sustaining conflict and human rights abuses*, please see:
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa170302006>

Public Document

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