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## **Halt ships of shame from the USA carrying weapons to Egypt**

A ship carrying a cargo of weapons with explosives en route from the USA to Egypt must not be allowed to offload because of a substantial risk the weapons will be used by Egyptian security forces to commit human rights violations, Amnesty International said on Thursday.

The organization has tracked the Dutch-flagged ship, MV Schippersgracht, for the past two months. It is currently in the Mediterranean Sea and due to arrive in Egypt early next week.

The vessel had previously arrived at the US Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU), Southport in North Carolina, USA on 24 February 2012.

MOTSU is the largest ammunition port in the US and is the Department of Defense's key Atlantic Coast ammunition shipping point.

On 3 March 2012 the ship left Sunny Point, a military-only port, carrying a class of dangerous goods that covers cartridges for weapons, fuses, and other ammunition. The ship has a cargo capacity of 21,000 tons and 1,100 twenty foot containers. The captain reported the ship's next destination as Port Said in Egypt.

"This ship of shame should not be allowed to unload its dangerous cargo in Egypt, and there is a substantial risk that this is what it plans to do," said Brian Wood Amnesty International's head of arms control. "There is a clear pattern that weapons from previous ships have recently been used to commit serious human rights violations by the Egyptian security forces, and yet the US is recklessly sending a constant flow of arms to Egypt."

As recently as last month, Egypt's Central Security Forces (riot police) used excessive force, including shotguns and live ammunition, to disperse protests, killing at least 16 people and injuring hundreds of others.

Over the past year, the Egyptian security forces including the military have used excessive force, including lethal force, against protestors. More than one hundred people were killed and thousands more injured over the last five months by security forces.

The Dutch company Spliethoff's Bevrachtingskantoor BV, a contractor for the US Military Sealift Command, that manages the Schippersgracht provided no comment on the latest shipment when contacted by Amnesty International.

The latest shipment follows a series of significant quantities of arms the US supplied to Egypt.

Between 11 December 2011 and 5 February 2012, the Egyptian Procurement Office (EPO) of the Armament Authority, Ministry of Defense shipped a total of 349 tons of military and dual use equipment with a value of at least USD\$35 million supplied on seven US-flagged cargo ships, which are managed by American President Lines Maritime Ltd.

Equipment on these seven cargo ships included military spare parts and components for electronic equipment, tactical and support vehicles, tanker vehicles, armoured vehicles and tanks, spare parts for AH-64 Apache, H-3 and SH-2G(E) helicopters.

The Egyptian security forces' use of ammunition is a clear example of the urgent need for the establishment and implementation of an effective global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which enters the final stage of crucial negotiations in July.

Amnesty International is calling for ammunitions to be included among the conventional arms to be regulated by the treaty, a move the US currently opposes.

“The violent repression of protestors at the hands of Egyptian security forces is sadly one of many examples as to why the world needs a bullet-proof Arms Trade Treaty. As the world's largest arms exporter, the US in particular needs to match its rhetoric on human rights with genuine action, something it has so far failed to do,” said Brian Wood.

Amnesty International working with Transarms and the International Peace and Information Service (IPIS) has documented a series of ‘Ships of Shame’ transferring of arms from the world's major irresponsible arms suppliers, including China, Russia, and USA, to countries where there is a substantial risk the weapons will be used to commit serious human rights violations.

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Notes to editors

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Amnesty International conducted the research into recent ships from the US to Egypt in conjunction with Transarms and IPSIS.

Background information on MV Schippersgracht's journey

The Dutch-flagged general cargo ship MV Schippersgracht arrived at Baltimore, in Maryland, in the USA, on 25 January 2012 from Eemshaven, in Groningen, in the Netherlands.

The ship left Baltimore on 26 January 2012 and reached Jacksonville, in Florida, on 28 January 2012. The Schippersgracht left Jacksonville nearly one month later, on 23 February 2012, and sailed North to the port of the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU), Southport in North Carolina, in the USA, where the ship arrived on 24 February 2012.

The MOTSU is described by North Carolina Department of Commerce as the “largest ammunition port in the nation... and is the Department of Defense's key Atlantic Coast ammunition shipping point. It provides worldwide trans-shipment of Department of Defense ammunition, explosives and other dangerous cargo”, as well as being a logistics hub for intermodal military cargo movements by rail, trucks, and ships.

On 3 March 2012, the ship left Sunny Point with cargo that included IMO Class C of dangerous goods that is equivalent to the UN Hazard Material Division 1.4, which covers cartridges for weapons, fuzes and detonators, other ammunition.

The Schippersgracht was not listed in the commercial movements of the US East Coast ports and its last port of call in the USA was Sunny Point, indicating that its cargo is of military nature only.

The International Maritime Organisation and UN Hazard Materials category 1.4 covers cartridges for weapons, fuses, and other ammunition.