

Control Arms India Update

A Monthly Newsletter from Control Arms Foundation

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Control Arms Foundation of India, formerly known as India Working Group on Arms Control was established on 10th September 2004 in New Delhi. The Foundation functions at an all India level and consists of noted academics, lawyers, journalists, former military personnel and human rights activists. The aim of the Foundation is to address issues of control arms, small arms light weapons proliferation, women and disarmament and conducting research on India's defence policies and military expenditure. The Foundation aspires to create a movement in the sub-continent where defence and military issues no longer remains a department where the public has no say.

The Control Arms India Update brings news, views and analyses on issues pertaining to small arms, light weapons, gun running, human rights violations due to arms by both state and non-state actors, arms transfers, military expenditure and defence policies pertaining to Indian sub-continent. This is the first issue of the newsletter that was launched on 12th June 2005

Northeast India and Bangladesh Gunrunning

In what is surely a setback for North East India insurgent groups, Bangladesh has launched an operation against "gunrunners" in the area along the Indo-Bangla border in Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. The operation, launched on May 27, could badly cripple the insurgents based in the region who depend on armaments supply from Bangladesh. The operation is being carried out along 200-kilometre stretch of the international border from Habiganj to Sylhet districts in Bangladesh. Hundreds of security personnel belonging to the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) have been deployed for the operation, they said. Over six members of Northeast rebel groups, along with a Bangladeshi national, have been killed in the operation at Madhabpur in the Kamalganj subdivision in Moulvi Bazar district bordering Sylhet. "Whether any of the casualties belonged to the banned United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), has not been ascertained as yet," the sources said. There was a fierce encounter at Madhabpur, they said, adding that Bangladesh launched the "surprise operation" following growing international pressure to take action against the growing influence of trans-national terror networks. The bodies of those killed are currently lying unclaimed at the Moulvi Bazar Sadar Hospital.

There have also been several arrests of Indian insurgents and Bangladeshi gunrunners. Among those held is one Abdus Samad of Jhenaigati village in Sherpur. Samad has close links with the ULFA and is said to be a key member of the outfit's gun supply chain. "There have been arrests at Kamalganj, Srimangal and Kulaura as well." A huge quantity of arms and ammunition has been seized from them. The sources said that "reports" from across the border show that the operation is expected to last through the monsoon with several battalions of the BDR and RAB being mobilised. The operation is being carried out upto ten kilometres inside the Bangladeshi territory. The sources said that Bangladesh is claiming that the operation is against gunrunners. But the primary targets are members of the North East insurgent groups that are actively involved in the supply and sale of firearms, grenades and explosives. Though the supply is mainly directed towards India, through the porous stretches of the border in Assam and Meghalaya, some of the arms are also given to local criminal elements. "It goes on to prove that any country supporting foreign terrorists will itself be affected some day. Bangladesh is paying the price now," the sources stated.

With the gunrunning network being "disturbed", the insurgent groups will find it hard to sustain their violent operations in the region," the sources felt. The development could also affect the finances of some groups, particularly the ULFA, which had set up a thriving business of armaments sale to smaller insurgent outfits. The movement of the insurgents, through the areas where the operation is on, is also expected to be a little tougher.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi newspapers today quoted Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin saying: "When we had received information, our forces immediately struck and rooted out the group, and the operation was successful." He was reportedly briefing reporters at his office yesterday about the Kamalganj (Moulvi Bazar) operation on Friday. "Bangladesh has never allowed insurgents or international terrorists to operate on its soil. We will never allow them in future," he reportedly commented. Bangladesh's State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar was also reported stating yesterday that the government "will allow no internal or external terrorist group in Bangladesh." He said the crackdown on terrorist activities is a "continuing process."

Source : <http://www.nagalim.nl>

Modus Operandi of Illicit Weapons Transfer Along the Indian Ocean

A cache of arms found by Indian police in a container at the port of Mumbai highlights fears that containers are being used to smuggle illicit weapons around the globe. Mumbai police seized 37 revolvers, 1,280 rounds of ammunition and a silencer on 27th May from a container that arrived from Singapore at the busy Jawaharlal Nehru Port. The stash was hidden in 27 barrels of grease and bound for a local criminal gang, police said. They suspected the container — which arrived on May 11 — came from either Singapore or Dubai, in the complex web of international container trans-shipment trade. "Containers are going to be used for this kind of thing. Only between one and three per cent are actually checked worldwide," said Dominick Donald, a senior analyst in maritime terrorism with Aegis Defence Services in London.

A clearing house agent arrested for his alleged involvement in the smuggling of firearms that were recovered from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT). DCP Dhananjay Kamlakar said the agent Madhu Kutty was arrested from suburban Andheri where he ran a clearing house 'Sai Logistics' and added Mukund Patel, who was earlier arrested in the same case, used to work there as a supervisor. Kamlakar said Kutty was arrested on the basis of information provided by Patel during interrogation and added that he has been remanded to police custody till June eight. Patel had visited Bangkok on April six and supervised the loading of guns into the container which had been kept in a barrel full of grease, he said.

Kamlakar said the investigations have revealed that the guns were earlier meant to be sent in February but the plan did not work out at that time. On May 21, in a pre-dawn swoop, city police raided the JNPT port and recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition, reportedly being smuggled into the country by gangster Chhota Rajan. 37 small arms along with 1280 rounds of ammunition was found in one of the barrels. The consignment had arrived in India on May 11 on a ship called Mimitsa which is owned by Samudra Shipping Company.

Source : <http://www.dawn.com/2005/05/27/int18.htm> & <http://www.newkerala.com>, 31 May 2005

\$100 Million in Arms given to Nepal Since 2002

Reports from India quoting intelligence and diplomatic sources said Gyanendra wanted to assume direct rule last December but was restrained by New Delhi. The king, however, surprised his foreign friends — India, the United States and Britain — with his Feb. 1 coup, hoping the world would back his fight against "terrorism." But few believe there is a military solution to Nepal's Maoist revolution.

New Delhi and London immediately condemned the royal government takeover and stopped the flow of military hardware. The Bush administration followed in condemning the royal coup, but was silent about arms transfers, apparently because everything earmarked for fiscal year 2005 was delivered before the coup. The three foreign governments have given Nepal more than \$100 million worth of arms, ammunition and training for the royal army since 2002.

Source : <http://washtimes.com/world/20050513-104752-5094r.htm>, 13 May 2005

India : Market for US Weapons Systems

Richard Aboulafia, military analyst with Teal Group consulting firm, on Bush's decision to open India to arms manufacturers. Once, India was allied with the Soviet Union, and roughly 70% of India's military hardware still comes from Russia. But as military ties between India and the U.S. grow tighter, Russian influence could wane. In 2002 and 2003, India received more than \$77 million in security assistance from the United States to wage the war on terrorism. No FMF was granted for 2004 and 2005. But, India is making up for it with Economic Support Funds. As mentioned earlier, while ESF is sometimes earmarked for development

programs, as unrestricted grants the funds can be used to offset arms purchases. ESF to India jumped from \$10.5 million in 2003 to a request of \$14 million for 2006. The country is also eligible for free or deeply discounted weapons and military equipment through the Excess Defense Articles program.

Between 1994 and 2003, India purchased \$128.2 million in arms from the United States, a sizable amount given that sanctions were imposed for a number of years.[89] Now that those restrictions have been lifted, India expects more deals on military hardware. In December 2001, right after the restrictions were lifted, the U.S. expedited the review of India's request for radar and light combat aircraft. More systems are "in the pipeline," including weapons-locating radar, military aircraft and engines for light combat aircraft.[90] In August 2004, India accepted delivery of the first of 12 Firefinder weapons-locating radar purchased from Thales-Raytheon Systems. Another deal in the works is the P-3 Orion naval reconnaissance plane equipped with the latest avionics, including sensors and computerized command and control and weapons systems.

In 2004, President Bush unveiled a new agreement to increase technical cooperation between the two countries, permitting the export of sensitive nuclear and space technology to India. In turn, India has agreed to strengthen controls on exports of sensitive technologies to other countries. Bush called the agreement "an important milestone."

After announcing the sale of billions in F-16 fighters to Pakistan, President Bush called Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to tell him U.S. military technology like fighter planes would now be available to his nation as well. This was good news to India, which is in the middle of a push to modernize its military, but it was great news to U.S. weapons manufacturers. As a spokesman for Lockheed Martin, manufacturer of the F-16 fighter plane, said, "India is a market we want to pursue."

Source : US Weapons At War, Arms Trade Resource Centre, June 2005
<http://worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/reports/wawjune2005.html#7>

Opinion - Atanu Dey

India's Development & The Care and Feeding of the Permanent Arms Industry

There must be a cheaper method of ensuring security for India. I am referring to the talk that is going around about the US selling F-16 fighter planes to India. I don't know how much they cost exactly but I guess that they go for about a \$100 million a piece. India may end up getting about 125 of them from the US for a whopping \$10 billion. There is much rejoicing going on in some circles at that prospect. For me, that is one of the most depressing news going around.

Recently the US Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice was on a state visit to India. There was much gushing talk about military and high-tech cooperation between the so-called largest democracies. The Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh gushed: "The Next Steps in the Strategic Partnership, or NSSP, Phase II should be concluded fairly soon. High Technology trade will continue to grow. We will cooperate more closely in the field of energy. Our defense cooperation will be expanded. Civil aviation is another major area of growth through an Open Skies agreement. This will impact positively on our economic and trade links."

In other news, the US is close to selling F-16s to Pakistan. I presume that they are meant for Pakistan's security. Against which threat, one may ask. India, I suspect. India because India will have F-16s from the US. And why would India want F-16s? I suspect that India has to guard against the threat posed by Pakistan's purchase of F-16s from the US. It is nothing if not touching to see the concern that the US has for the security of both India and Pakistan. Both are strategic partners to the US.

During the Iran-Iraq war of some decades ago, the US was even-handed and sold arms to both sides. "On Mondays-Wednesdays-Fridays, the US supported Iran; on Tuesdays-Thursdays-Saturdays, it supported Iraq. One day they got the days mixed up – which nearly ended the bloody war. It scared the shit out of the US," as Mark Russell commented. Anyhow, in a world of constant change, one is grateful for whatever consistency one finds. The US consistently supports conflict around the globe, arming both sides and giving military aid to whichever side is unable to fork up the cash for the weapons of mass destruction.

I wish I did not have to refer to an old piece of mine called Dollar Auctions and Deadly Games. But the sad truth is that I could not have asked for a better example of that model. Here is something that should warm any war-monger's heart: Deceit and dollars: U.S. foreign policy secrets from December 2004.

In his gripping tell-all book, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, a guilt-ridden Perkins explains in amazing detail that EHMs are hired guns, employed by consulting companies under contract to the United States government, who loan shark billions of dollars to third world countries to develop their infrastructures.

The money is then funneled back to U.S. companies, through massive engineering and construction projects. The EHM's job is to saddle these countries with so much debt that they can't possibly repay it. And there's the rub. The U.S. dictates repayment terms - a military base here, a UN vote there or access to a debtor country's natural resources.

Perkins dramatically unveils many recent events where the U.S. called upon EHMs to lend a hand, such as after the 1973 oil embargo. Perkins says Washington began negotiating with Saudi Arabia, offering to take them into the 20th century with technical support, military hardware and training, in exchange for assurances that there would never again be another oil embargo. Perkins' primary objective was to assure that a large amount of petrodollars went back to the U.S., and Saudi Arabia's economy would become intertwined and dependent on the U.S. Presumably Saudi Arabia would then become more westernized and sympathetic towards the U.S. system. However, the modernization infuriated conservative Muslims and made its neighboring countries, especially Israel, feel threatened.

The Wall Street Journal reports

Lockheed has been pushing Washington hard on both sales. Lockheed officials have told the U.S. that unless it receives new orders by October for the F-16, it will have to begin shutting down its production line late this year. It takes three years to build an F-16, so some work would continue at the facility through 2008. We don't want to have Lockheed go bankrupt, do we? Not if "we" refers to the politicians that are bought and paid for by the arms industry. And now to quote myself once again (from *The True Weapons of Mass Destruction*):

Look carefully at the military-industrial complex of a rich nation such as the US. General Dynamics GD (or some such company which makes, say, fighter jets) invests a couple of billion dollars to build F15s (Note: all names are made up.) Let's say that F15s are the last word in the world of fighter planes. So the US military buys 200 of these killing machines for \$50 million a pop. So will GD now retire their assembly line and stop making a killing? No way in hell. They sell a few hundred of these to the allies of the US. Now will they stop? Not bloody likely.

Here is what they do. Now that they are done with selling to the US military and to the militaries of friendly countries, they tell the US government, "Look, everyone has F15s. We need F16s if we have to maintain air superiority." So they start working on developing the next generation. So the US now has F16s, which are better than the F15s. What about selling the F15s to those third world countries that keep fighting amongst themselves? Sweet deal.

As I was saying, there must be a cheaper method of ensuring security for India and Pakistan. Talks, for example. But that would not be cheap for the arms dealers and their hired politicians. It would be a disaster for them if peace were to break up. The US imports stuff from all over the world, especially China. Then it outsources and offshores hundreds of thousands of jobs all over the world, especially India. The US has to sell something in exchange, doesn't it? Sell the poor bastards some F-16s in exchange for all the BPO jobs and other labor intensive stuff we buy from them, goes the refrain.

Before I am taken to task by someone for stating the above, let me hasten to add that there is no law in the universe which prohibits a country from profiting from the stupidity of other countries. That India and Pakistan are abjectly poor overpopulated underdeveloped nations constantly at each others' throat willing to further impoverish themselves by buying impossibly expensive weapons from abroad is not the US's fault. The US merely supplies the arms, it does not directly go and starve millions of people of third world countries. The actual starving of untold millions of abjectly poor people in third rate world countries is because of the warmongering ignorant policy makers that populate these countries.

Source : <http://www.deeshaa.org>