

June 21, 2005

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
US Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

**Re: Arms Trade Treaty**

Dear Madame Secretary:

A legally-binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is an idea whose time has come. The United Kingdom's Foreign Minister Jack Straw will place the idea of an ATT on the agenda of the upcoming G8 Foreign Ministers' meeting on June 23, in London, England. We are encouraged by this initiative and urge you to support the UK's efforts to better control the proliferation of conventional weapons. A global treaty controlling transfers of conventional weapons based on established principles of international law will enhance U.S. security, while at the same time further champion its values of freedom, democracy, and human rights.

While weapons of mass destruction remain a major concern, the security threats spawned by the global trade in conventional weapons are among the most vexing problems confronting the world today. Weapons and the capacity to produce them are proliferating at an alarming rate. This proliferation too often fuels conflicts and human rights abuses and inhibits the process for economic development. In addition to the rising number of States involved in the arms trade, many weapons-exporting States have weak export controls, leading to irresponsible transfers and illegal diversions.

The United States has arguably the most comprehensive weapons export laws in the world. Yet, due to the international nature of the arms trade, tough export laws enacted by one State are not enough to prevent weapons from reaching irresponsible end-users. Current international measures lack the strength and scope needed to more effectively stem unwanted arms transfers. An ATT is urgently needed to help the United States and its allies deny military technology to repressive regimes and abusive armed groups. A strong international agreement setting a minimum standard of control would establish a common, legally-binding baseline to which countries would be held accountable should they irresponsibly transfer weapons to end-users who would use them to violate international humanitarian and human rights law and potentially threaten the United States and others throughout the world.

A strong ATT would also champion U.S. values. Over the past 50 years, the U.S., in coalition with its international partners, has developed a series of binding agreements concerning human rights and international humanitarian law. These agreements establish a number of important limitations on states' ability to transfer weapons. The UK's proposed idea of an Arms Trade Treaty will draw together, codify, and apply these limitations to the arms trade in a clear and

consistent manner. By explicitly stating that human rights and humanitarian law are to be taken into account before an arms sale, as various countries such as the United States already do in their own national export control regime, the treaty would prove an invaluable contribution by increasing the level of confidence that transferred weapons would only be used in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

The United States has a unique opportunity to effect positive change by leading in the effort to enact strong life-saving arms control. When you succeeded in convincing the European Union to not lift the arms embargo on China, you rightly pointed out that selling arms to a nondemocratic state with a poor human rights record would “send the wrong signal on human rights.” We urge you now to work with the international community to send the right message on human rights by engaging in the development of a legally-binding treaty, which is based on universal principles of human rights and humanitarian law.

Sincerely,

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David T. Ives, Executive Director  
Albert Schweitzer Institute

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Alexandra Arriaga, Director of Government Relations  
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