



Fourteen Senators Call for U.S. Involvement
in United Nations Global Arms Trade Treaty
December 5, 2006

Washington, DC – *U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and thirteen other Senators yesterday evening sent a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urging the United States to reconsider its opposition to the development of a global arms trade treaty.*

A resolution to begin developing international standards for the sale and export of weapons will be voted on before the United Nations General Assembly in early December. The Senators urged Secretary Rice to support the upcoming resolution and move toward establishing an international system in line with the United States' own strong standards.

In late October, the United States was the only country of 140 to vote against the development of global arms trade standards, despite our country's strong arms export system.

“Due to the global nature of the arms trade, a buyer who is barred from purchasing weapons under U.S. law can exploit lower standards in other countries and receive weapons,” the Senators wrote. **“In order to close this loop-hole and ensure that controls imposed by one state or region are not undermined by the lax controls of another, national and regional initiatives must be complemented by the development and enforcement of global standards.”**

The letter was signed by Senators Feinstein, Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.), Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), John Kerry (D-Mass.), Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii), Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), Russell Feingold (D-Wis.), Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), and Tom Harkin (D-Iowa).

The following is the complete text of their letter to Secretary of State Rice:

December 4, 2006

**The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C.**

Dear Secretary Rice:

As you know, the First Committee of the UN General Assembly passed a resolution on October 26, by a resounding margin of 139 to 1, that begins a process to develop a global arms trade treaty. We write to express our disappointment that the United States failed to join our allies in supporting this life-saving initiative and cast the only “no” vote on the resolution.

As members of the U.S. Senate, we are proud that the U.S. arms export system we helped create is considered the “gold standard” of the world. Many of us have worked diligently with the Department of State through the years to ensure that U.S. weapons do not fall into the wrong hands.

However, we understand that even the strictest export control system in one country is not enough to stop weapons from reaching irresponsible end-users. Due to the global nature of the arms trade, a buyer who is barred from purchasing weapons under U.S. law can exploit lower standards in other countries and receive weapons. In order to close this loop-hole and ensure that controls imposed by one state or region are not undermined by the lax controls of another, national and regional initiatives must be complemented by the development and enforcement of global standards. Such was the intention behind the International Arms Sales Code of Conduct Act, passed by Congress in November 1999, which required the president begin negotiations toward a multilateral regime of arms export criteria. The resolution offers the opportunity to begin such negotiations.

The decision to vote “no” on the resolution supported by the United Kingdom and 138 other nations – including every NATO country except the U.S. – is out of step with our closest allies and long-established U.S. policy. Given the horrific consequences of the under-regulated global arms trade, discussions on how to set up a global regime within the United Nations is clearly in the interest of the United States. While we are disappointed in the vote, we encourage you to reconsider the U.S. position and support the resolution when it comes to a vote at the UN General Assembly plenary in early December. We look forward to future collaboration between the State Department and the Senate as you work with U.S. allies to further global efforts to control the global market of arms and pursue global standards as enshrined in U.S. law.

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