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Frank von Hippel  
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Henry C. Kelly  
*President*

September 28, 2001

Dear Member of Congress,

Initial drafts of the administration's "Anti-Terrorism Act of 2001" proposed language to waive all restrictions on arms exports and military aid to countries that would support U.S. counter-terrorism activities for the next five years. The current version would limit the waiver to India and Pakistan for two years. The Federation of American Scientists strongly supports efforts to strengthen domestic and international efforts to combat terrorism and improve U.S. security. But we oppose open-ended waivers of arms export controls that could have precisely the opposite effect.

Providing foreign states with more weapons will not make it easier for them to assist U.S. anti-terrorism efforts. The United States mainly needs their help in providing intelligence and logistical support. Increasing their access to U.S. arms does, however, increase the likelihood that weapons will leak through corrupt channels or theft into the hands of terrorists. U.S. arms could also help authoritarian governments build national military forces more likely to be used for suppressing legitimate dissent than defending against external threats and terrorism.

History has shown that sending weapons and military aid to regimes that do not share U.S. interests can end up undermining U.S. security. In Panama, Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, and now probably in Afghanistan, U.S. soldiers have faced U.S.-origin weapons or technology in military confrontations. Sending more weapons and aid overseas without regard for the recipient's stability, history of allegiance to U.S. interests, or human rights record may easily boomerang back again. Congress should be especially wary of sending arms to India and Pakistan, where they may do less to counter terrorism than they will to add fuel to the simmering fire between these two nuclear powers.

We urge you to reject any blanket waiver of arms transfers restrictions in the Anti-Terrorism bill or elsewhere. If the United States needs to provide benefits to nations such as Pakistan in order to persuade them to join an anti-terrorist alliance, we could offer increased foreign aid, debt reduction, or other economic benefits. These inducements are much more likely to reduce the poverty that is often the breeding ground of terrorists and much less likely to end up arming terrorist groups or assisting state-supported repression.

Sincerely,

Henry Kelly  
President

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