

France arming Libyan rebels in violation of UN resolution

By [Global Research](#)

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France has become the first country openly to admit it has supplied the Libyan rebels with weapons – a measure banned by the UN Security Council. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has labeled the move as a major violation of the UN resolution.

“We have asked our French colleagues if the statement about weapon supply from France to the Libyan rebels is true,” Lavrov said. “We are waiting for the answer. If that is proved to be true, that would be a major violation of the UN resolution 1970.”

The move was also condemned by the African Union, while China indirectly objected to it.

A French military spokesman, Colonel Thierry Burkhard, said the arms, including machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, as well as munitions, were parachuted in to besieged rebels.

According to the official, the deliveries took place in early June in the western Nafusa Mountains... AP reported on Wednesday.

Chairman of the African Union Jean Ping has condemned the move in an interview with BBC, saying it threatens to put the entire region at risk.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei indirectly opposed France’s actions on Thursday, saying that countries should avoid actions that go beyond UN Security Council directives.

Spokesman for the rebels Mahmoud Jibrilm who is now in Austria, said more weapons are needed to fight against Muammar Gaddafi’s regime. He also said the Benghazi-based Transitional National Council needs large amounts of money from foreign sponsors to fund its programs for civilians.

Meanwhile the UK on Thursday said that it is supplying body armor to the rebels. Britain’s Foreign Secretary William Hague said the UK was offering 5,000 sets of body armor, 6,650 police uniforms, 5,000 high-visibility vests and communication tools to Benghazi. The equipment is meant for the rebel police.

“Armed rebels are not civilians, which the UN wants to protect”

France has been among the main powers behind the NATO-led air campaign, officially aimed at protecting civilians from assaults by Gaddafi’s forces. However, many view a change of

regime in Libya as the main reason of the alliance's involvement in the country.

The Libyan National Transitional Council last week also received its first tranche of financial help from the international community to the amount \$100 million, UK Foreign Secretary William Hague announced on Wednesday. The rebels are receiving funds from several nations including the US, the UK, Italy and France.

The UN Security Council resolution 1970, which was adopted on February 26, imposed an arms embargo on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, preventing weapons from being supplied to anyone in Libya. The UN Security Council resolution 1973, which established a no-fly zone over Libya, allowed NATO countries "to take all necessary measures... to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya."

As the unrest has been continuing in Libya since mid-February, the fighting between the forces of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and the rebels, backed by the NATO forces, seems to have reached a stalemate.

France's admission to arming rebels undermines the whole reasoning behind the bombing campaign, says John Laughland, the director for the Institute of Democracy and Co-operation in Paris.

"The argument, as we know, was predicated on the accusation that Libyan government was attacking civilians. The admission that France was arming the rebels is very obviously an admission that what's going on in Libya is a fight between the government and armed rebels, and armed rebels are not civilians. So any attack on the armed rebels in Libya is therefore not necessarily a war crime. In other words this news is not only incompatible with the case that's being made for the war in Libya, it completely contradicts it," he told RT.

George Kenney, a former US diplomat, said that France had also apparently shipped a couple of light tanks to the rebels, and that this would only lead to more problems later.

"That was very foolish on the part of France. We do not know who these rebels are. We do not know what they are going to do with these weapons. And I would suspect that some significant percentage of the weapons will find their way into the hands of terrorists and will just become another problem for us to have to deal with later on."

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