

U.S. shipped 989 munitions containers to Israel week before Gaza invasion

By [Global Research](#)

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In the dying days of the Bush administration, and a week before Israel launched an aerial bombing campaign, followed by a land invasion of the Gaza Strip, the U.S. military shipped 989 containers of munitions to Israel.

Each container was 20-feet long with a total estimated net weight of 14,000 tonnes. The shipment reportedly reached Israel last month at Ashod, 40 kilometres north of Gaza. The huge arsenal of munitions will replenish those expended in the Gaza War.

According to Amnesty International in the UK, the shipment included white phosphorous.

The international organization says 300 of the containers had been unloaded at Ashod in March by a German cargo ship, Wehr Elb.

“We are sure that the consignment contained arms and munitions.” We have a strong suspicion that it contained white phosphorous which has been used against civilians in Gaza,” Brian Wood, head of Arms Control Campaign at Amnesty International in London said late this week.

“The cargo ship had been chartered and controlled by US Military Sealift Command. It left the USA for Israel on December 20, one week before the start of Israeli attacks on Gaza. The vessel was carrying 989 containers of munitions, each of them 20-feet long with a total estimated net weight of 14,000 tonnes,” he said.

“The world community including the Palestinians should be able to know where the remaining 680 containers on board the Wehr Elbe have gone and why the US is not transparent about the final destination of the dangerous cargo.

“A Pentagon spokesperson confirmed to Amnesty International that “the unloading of the entire US munitions shipment was successfully completed at Ashdod on March 22,” Wood pointed out.

The spokesperson had said the shipment was destined for a US pre-positioned munitions stockpile in Israel, he said. Under a US-Israel agreement, munitions from this stockpile may be transferred for Israeli use if necessary.

“There is a great risk that the new munitions may be used by the Israeli military to commit further violations of international law, like the ones committed during the war in Gaza,” Wood said.

“Legally and morally, this US arms shipment should have been halted by the Obama administration given the extent of the evidence showing how military equipment and munitions of this kind were recently used by the Israeli forces for war crimes. Arms supplies in these circumstances are contrary to provisions in US law,” he said.

An independent inquiry into possible abuses of international law by both sides in the Gaza conflict has been launched by the United Nations. The panel is being headed by Justice Richard J Goldstone of South Africa.

“The victims of this brutal conflict have a right to justice and reparation. The perpetrators on both sides must be held accountable if there is to be an end to the cycles of violence and impunity that have persisted for so long. There must be no excuse for either Israel or the Palestinians not to fully cooperate with the inquiry,’ Amnesty’s Middle East and North Africa Programme Director Malcolm Smart said this week.

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