

Beat: Politics

European Parliament calls for more control and transparency about EU arms export

EU are the second largest arms supplier

Madrid, 17.09.2020, 20:52 Time

USPA NEWS - EU citizens have to be better informed about their governments' strategic choices on an issue that directly affects their security, warn MEPs this week. About the EU arms export, in light of the EU's growing importance in arms production, MEPs call for strengthened public oversight on exports of military equipment and technology, in a resolution adopted on Wednesday with 341 votes for, 124 against and 230 abstentions.

Assessing how member states were implementing the EU's common rules governing the control of exports of military technology and equipment, MEPs remind member states that these rules, in line with European values, take precedence over any national economic, social, commercial or industrial interests. Independent surveys (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) show that arms exports from the EU-28 amounted to some 26% of the global total in 2015-2019, collectively making the EU-28 the second largest arms supplier in the world after the USA (36%) and followed by Russia (21%).

The countries of the Middle East and North Africa, regions in which several armed conflicts are ongoing, remain the foremost regional destinations for exports, according to the last two annual reports on EU exports of military technology and equipment (for the years 2017 and 2018). MEPs also warn that there are no sanction mechanisms in place should a member state engage in exports that are clearly not compatible with the criteria in the EU common rules.

An interactive online arms exports database

MEPs believe that the publication of the two last reports represents progress towards a common EU position on arms exports. Still, they note that while all member states submitted data for the 2018 report, one third of them were incomplete in their submissions. Calling for more uniformity in the data submitted, MEPs welcome the Council's decision to introduce clear standards on how member states should provide their figures. MEPs also welcome the decision to transfer the annual report onto an interactive online database that should be up and running before the 2019 report is published.

The rapporteur Hannah Neumann (Greens/EFA, DE) said: "This report recognizes that increasing European cooperation and EU funding in arms production and development requires EU-level monitoring and control. We simply say: Where EU money is involved in arms development, we also need an enforceable mechanism for EU control of any future exports. This would be based on the restrictive application of the eight existing criteria of the EU Common Position on arms exports and allow for sanctions for cases where member states do not comply with these rules."

Common Position 2008/944/CFSP, adopted in 2008, is a legally binding set of rules containing eight criteria that are to be taken into account when issuing export licenses. The criteria include the respect for human rights in the country of final destination, the preservation of national and regional stability as well as how compatible arms exports are with the development of the recipient country.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-17551/european-parliament-calls-for-more-control-and-transparency-about-eu-arms-export.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Jose A. Martin

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