

U.S.-Israeli Policy for Exporting Arrow Missile Undecided

- [Arms Control Today](#)

September 2002

By Wade Boese

Top U.S. government officials testified in July that the Bush administration has not yet formulated a policy about the possible export of a joint U.S.-Israeli theater missile defense system, the Arrow, to India or any other country.

The absence of a formal U.S. Arrow export policy came to light when Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told senators at a July 25 Armed Services Committee hearing that the administration did not have a “view” about India buying the Arrow system. Two days earlier, The Washington Post had reported on a proposed Israeli Arrow sale to India, the export of which would need U.S. approval because Arrow incorporates U.S. technology.

Appearing before a subcommittee hearing of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee July 29, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Vann Van Diepen and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Marshall Billingslea broadened Rumsfeld’s statement, explaining that Washington had no position on Arrow exports in general.

Van Diepen informed senators that Arrow is classified as a Category I system under the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which is a voluntary arrangement of 33 countries, including the United States, aimed at preventing the spread of missiles and related technologies capable of carrying a 500-kilogram payload at least 300 kilometers. MTCR members are expected to maintain a strong presumption of denial on exports of Category I items, which include whole missiles or major subsystems such as rocket engines.

The presumption of denial, however, is not a ban. Members are to weigh five criteria set out in the MTCR guidelines when considering a Category I export. Those criteria include, among other things, evaluating the importer’s intentions for using the export and whether it poses a potential proliferation risk. The United States has made past Category I exports, shipping Tomahawk and Trident missiles to the United Kingdom and transferring items to European and Japanese space launch programs.

Van Diepen cautioned that Washington needs to be wary about what kind of precedent others might draw from future U.S. exports. Earlier U.S. Category I exports were made to close allies or were destined for nonmilitary use, whereas sending the Arrow to an unstable region with nuclear-armed adversaries would be qualitatively different. “It’s going to be hard for us potentially to say no to a Russian export of Category I rocket technology to Iran,” Van Diepen said, if the United States is making similar kinds of exports.

Billingslea appeared more inclined toward permitting Arrow exports, commenting that the Pentagon believed missile defenses are “inherently stabilizing” and that the United States should explore protection against missiles with both India and Pakistan. Nevertheless, Billingslea added that no conclusion existed about how to balance MTCR obligations with foreign defense cooperation.

Although not specifically indicating whether New Delhi had contacted Washington about the missile defense system, Billingslea suggested that India had not officially requested Arrow. “We also need to

U.S.-Israeli Policy for Exporting Arrow Missile Undecided

Published on Arms Control Association (<https://www.armscontrol.org>)

hear from the Indians in terms of what they need, what they want, what kind of missile defense systems do they want to have, and for what ends," he said.

An Israeli official interviewed August 20 denied that Israel is pushing to export the Arrow now. The official remarked that Israel believes that it is logical to make Arrow available to allies and friendly countries but that current tensions in South Asia warrant caution.

Moreover, the official said Israel is focused on producing Arrow for itself with the prospect of war with Iraq looming, rather than shipping missiles to others. Israel is currently finalizing deployment of its second Arrow battery and is aiming to field a third.

Not all theater missile defense systems would necessarily be classified as a Category I item. The U.S. Patriot system is not, and Washington has exported different versions of that missile system to several countries.

Source URL: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002-09/news/us-israeli-policy-exporting-arrow-missile-undecided>