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UN arms embargo on Somalia

In January 1992 the UN Security Council imposed an open ended arms embargo on Somalia. In February 2007 the embargo was amended to allow arms supplies to Somali Government Forces.

In January 1992 Security Council Resolution 733 established an arms embargo on Somalia in reaction to the ongoing conflict and deteriorating humanitarian situation. This Resolution was unanimously adopted.

In June 2001 Security Council Resolution 1356 allowed for exemptions to the embargo for supplies of non-lethal military equipment for use in humanitarian operations.

In July 2002 Security Council Resolution 1425 clarified the scope of the arms embargo, making clear that it prohibited the financing of arms acquisitions as well as the direct or indirect sale or supply of technical advice or military training.

In December 2006 Security Council Resolution 1725 partially lifted the UN arms embargo on Somalia. The resolution authorized the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and African Union member States to deploy a regional intervention force to protect Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and to arm and train the TFG security forces. The resolution maintains the existing embargo but states that its provisions do not apply to transfers of military equipment, technical training and assistance intended for the regional intervention force.

In February 2007 Security Council Resolution 1744 limited the embargo to non-state actors. It allowed the supply of weapons and military equipment intended solely for the purpose of helping develop Somali security sector institutions if the sanctions committee on Somalia had been notified in advance and on a case by case basis and if the SC had not made a negative decision within five working days after the notification.

In November 2008 Security Council Resolution 1844 amended the arms embargo to target entities that have violated the arms embargo or obstructed the delivery of humanitarian assistance to or in Somalia.

In December 2009 the UN imposed an arms embargo on Eritrea, partly in response to reports that Eritrea had violated the arms embargo on Somalia. (For more information see the entry on the [UN arms embargo on Eritrea](#))

In March 2013 Security Council Resolution 2093 amended the restrictions and procedures related to arms supplies to the Somali Government while maintaining the embargo on arms supplies to non-state actors in the country. Security Council Resolution 2111 from July 2013 further clarified the decisions of Resolution 2093. Under the resolutions, for a one-year period, until 6 March 2014, '(...) the arms embargo on Somalia shall not apply to deliveries of weapons, military equipment, assistance or training intended solely for the development of the Security Forces of the Federal Government of Somalia, and to provide security for the Somali people (...)'

Although at first sight this appeared to have fulfilled the requests from the Somali Government and the African Union that had called for lifting the conditions on military supplies to the Somali Government, such conditions remained or became even more restrictive.

Firstly, the resolutions introduced an annex listing several categories of military equipment the supply of which to the Federal Government of Somalia always requires an advance approval from the Sanctions Committee on a case-by-case basis. The items in the annex are Surface to Air Missiles; guns, howitzers and cannons with a calibre greater than 12.7 mm and their ammunition and components; mortars with a calibre greater than 82 mm; anti-tank guided weapons; charges and devices intended for military use containing energetic materials and weapons sights with a night vision capability.

The resolution does not indicate why these items were selected and questions can be raised about the formulations used in the annex. For example 'charges and devices intended for military using containing energetic materials' includes all types of regular ammunition.

Secondly, Resolution 2111 clarified that as before, in the absence of a negative decision by the Sanctions Committee supplies of weapons or military equipment intended solely for helping to develop Somali security sector institutions were allowed.

The resolutions differ from previous ones in that the Federal Government of Somalia instead of the supplier states was made responsible for ensuring that the Sanctions Committee is notified at least five days in advance of deliveries of weapons, military equipment, assistance and training to the security forces of the Federal Government of Somalia.

Finally the resolutions forbade the Federal Government of Somalia to transfer weapons to any entity or individual not in the service of its security forces. The resolutions did not clarify the definition of 'in service of its security forces', which is problematic because of the informal relations between the Federal Government of Somalia armed militias. However, the resolutions did oblige the Federal Government of Somalia to report to the UN Security Council on the structure of its Security Forces and the infrastructure and procedures for securing its arms stockpiles.

In March 2014 Security Council Resolution 2142 reaffirmed the overall arms embargo on Somalia and extended the provisions related to arms supplies to the Somali government until 25 October 2014.

In October 2014 Security Council Resolution 2182 reaffirmed the overall arms embargo on Somalia and extended the provisions related to arms supplies to the Somali government until 30 October 2015. It also authorised for a period of 12 months states to inspect in Somali waters or on the high seas vessels bound for Somalia which they have reasonable grounds to believe are carrying weapons to Somalia in violation of the arms embargo. In October 2015 the arms embargo was extended until 15 November 2016.

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