The United States Supports the Arms Trade Treaty

Press Statement
John Kerry
Secretary of State
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The United States looks forward to working with our international partners at the upcoming conference from March 18-28 to reach consensus on an Arms Trade Treaty that advances global security and respects national sovereignty and the legitimate arms trade. We supported and actively participated in negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty held at the United Nations in July 2012. Those negotiations made considerable progress, but ended before a treaty could be concluded. Accordingly, the United States supported a UN General Assembly resolution December 24, 2012 to convene the conference this month to build on those efforts.

The United States is steadfast in its commitment to achieve a strong and effective Arms Trade Treaty that helps address the adverse effects of the international arms trade on global peace and stability. An effective treaty that recognizes that each nation must tailor and enforce its own national export and import control mechanisms can generate the participation of a broad majority of states, help stem the illicit flow of conventional arms across international borders, and have important humanitarians benefits.

The United States could only be party to an Arms Trade Treaty that addresses international transfers of conventional arms solely and does not impose any new requirements on the U.S. domestic trade in firearms or on U.S. exporters. We will not support any treaty that would be inconsistent with U.S. law and the rights of American citizens under our Constitution, including the Second Amendment.

While the international arms trade affects every country, over one hundred states today do not have a system for control of international conventional arms transfers. We support a treaty that will bring all countries closer to existing international best practices, which we already observe, while preserving national decisions to transfer conventional arms responsibly. The international conventional arms trade is, and will continue to be, a legitimate commercial activity. But responsible nations should have in place control systems that will help reduce the risk that a transfer of conventional arms will be used to carry out the world’s worst crimes, including those involving terrorism, and serious human rights violations.

I wish the conference well and hope that we can reach consensus on a treaty that improves global security, advances our humanitarian goals, and enhances U.S. national security by encouraging all nations to establish meaningful systems and standards for regulating international arms transfers and ensuring respect for international law.