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U.S. State Department: Report On U.S. As Major Weapons Supplier To Third World Misleading

by Barbara Khol

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On Aug. 12 in Washington, State Department press officer Cynthia Whittlesey said a congressional report stating that the US had become the main weapons supplier to the Third World was misleading since figures were based on dollar-value comparisons. The Congressional Research Service report said US military exports to developing nations increased from about \$8 billion in 1989 to \$18.5 billion in 1990. According to Whittlesey, "In dollar terms, the largest share of US military exports are not for weapons but for construction, spare parts, and support." The CSR attributed skyrocketing weapons sales last year to the Gulf war and declining Pentagon budgets, which have forced US defense contractors to seek out foreign clients. Whittlesey said US exports generally were more expensive because they involve high technology, and other major exporters frequently subsidize costs or engage in bartering which conceals actual costs. She added that Washington is working with other weapons suppliers to curb sales of conventional arms. The CSR report also said the Soviet share of global weapons sales dropped from 38.5% in 1989 to 29.2% last year. Moscow's compliance with the embargo against Iraq was among the major contributors to declining sales. The report was authored by defense industry expert Richard Grimmett. (Basic data from AFP, 08/12/91)

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