



For Immediate Release

Contact: Mary Petrella (202) 225-2539

**STATEMENT OF HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
REGARDING SHORTFALLS IN INTERNATIONAL EXPORT CONTROL SYSTEM**

Washington, D.C. – June 3, 2004 – The current international export control system is insufficient to prevent the proliferation of MANPADS, man-portable air defense systems—shoulder-fired missiles designed to take down aircraft of all kinds, including civilian airliners. So says a report released today by the General Accounting Office, Congress’ nonpartisan investigative agency.

Commissioned by House Armed Services Committee Chairman Duncan Hunter, the official report indicates that although the United States has reached export control agreements with many countries that produce MANPADS, these commitments are nonbinding and subject to individual interpretation.

In particular, the Wassenaar Arrangement, the principle entity by which industrialized nations coordinate their export control policies, is powerless to enforce its own rules. According to GAO, “Without multilateral enforcement mechanisms, the U.S. government has little assurance that commitments by member countries to improve their controls over MANPADS will have an impact on members’ national policies and practices to reduce MANPADS proliferation.”

This latest report comes less than two years after the GAO found critical weaknesses that impede the ability of the existing multilateral export control system to achieve its nonproliferation goals. House International Relations Committee Chairman Henry Hyde joined Hunter in stating, “this refocuses our efforts on the need for an export control regime aimed at stopping the proliferation of weapons to terrorists.”

“It is every man for himself in the export control world right now,” Hunter said, “but America may end up paying the price. Unlike during the Cold War, there is inadequate coordination of national export control systems, insufficient information sharing and a total absence of enforcement mechanisms to ensure that participating states are playing by the rules. Of course, the dangers of proliferation have not evaporated; they have only changed,” Hunter continued.

Twenty countries have developed or produced at least 30 different types of MANPADS, with between 500,000 and 750,000 weapons believed to be in the worldwide inventory today, according

to GAO data; today, at least “a few thousand” of these are outside of government control. A single MANPADS missile can down an airliner.

Hunter noted that the House version of this year's defense authorization bill would make it the policy of the United States to seek continued negotiations of a strengthened international export control system to curb the proliferation of arms—including MANPADS—as well as militarily-sensitive goods and technology to countries of concern. “This legislation represents a good first step toward enhancing export control cooperation with our friends and allies,” the California Republican added.

Chairman Hunter has long supported a responsible international export control system to help protect America from terrorists and conventional adversaries. The GAO report can be found on the House Armed Services Committee web site at www.armedservices.house.gov.

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