

U.S., allies ready to loosen rules on high-tech exports, experts say

SUNDAY MAR 10 1991
BY JOHN GRAVOIS
POST WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — "Smart" weapons technology used by the United States to crush Iraq is destined to again fall into dangerous hands as an international consortium moves to relax export controls, national security experts contend.

Because lax controls helped Saddam Hussein emerge as a military force in the first place, experts argue it's astonishing that the United States and the 16 other member nations of the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM) are still working on a new agreement to further loosen controls.

"It's just menacing," said Rep. Charles Wilson, D-Lufkin, a member of the House Select Intelligence Committee.

"It would be sheer lunacy. It's beyond a mistake. It would be suicide," Wilson declared.

Nonetheless, it would hardly be surprising, because the U.S. Commerce Department has gone along with similar initiatives in the past, Wilson said.

"The Commerce Department would sell anything. They'd sell our nuclear arsenal," he said.

Among the technology COCOM would make more freely available to the Soviet Union are night-vision sensors that played a key role in the offensive against Iraq and microelectronic components that are critical for guidance systems and other aspects of "smart" bombs and missiles.

The White House and the Commerce Department last week announced new U.S. export controls aimed at significantly restricting the spread of missile technology and chemical and biological weapons.

"The new initiative reflects the recognition of the United States of the continuing danger of weapons development," Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher said in announcing the new controls.

Besides the United States, COCOM is made up of Australia, Japan and all NATO members with the exception of Iceland.

COCOM, based in Paris, was created in 1949 to prevent the transfer of military materials to communist nations. Its policies generally have teeth because any sale of sensitive goods to communist nations must be approved by the group.

citizens, his use of Scud missiles to terrorize civilian populations and the chilling specter of germ warfare and nuclear weapons have brought home the dangers proliferation poses to American interests and global peace and stability," the statement said.

White said the action is a step in the right direction, but it fails to address the key concern of getting other nations to abide by similar restrictions.

For example, the United States could sell sensitive materials to the Soviet Union, and the Soviets could in turn sell it to anyone they please, White explained.

In laying out the new policies, Mosbacher pledged to "seek maximum cooperation by other countries to adopt similar controls to stop the spread of these weapons."

"Our experience in the gulf has reinforced the lesson that the most effective export controls are those imposed multilaterally," it said.

But White countered that such talk is little more than "wishful thinking."

Even before the new U.S. regulations were announced, Germany and other nations were sending signals they are interested in tightening controls as well, but in fact have been working through COCOM to loosen controls, White said.

"They (other nations) are saying the right thing in public, but their actions speak louder than their words, and their actions are in another direction. There's a pattern of non-cooperation," she said.

Furthermore, White argued that a \$1 million fine and a 10-year jail sentence is inadequate deterrence to keep a lid even on U.S. exports. "That's just not enough," she said.

An encouraging sign is that Wilson and other congressmen are taking notice, speaking out and pushing legislation to tighten controls, White said.



Transitional flared arm, 2-cushion sleeper in a muted blue, forest green, sandalwood and rust striped damask

\$1,199



It is continually under pressure from the international business community to relax trade restrictions. Traditionally, U.S. Commerce officials have been supportive of lifting curbs while defense and intelligence officials have been opposed.

A White House statement last week about tougher internal controls in America also was mindful of business pressures, saying, "The new regulations are sensitive to the importance of U.S. exports to our economic vitality, and will not unfairly restrict legitimate commerce."

Said Jennifer White of the Center for Security Policy: "In light of what happened in the war, there's obviously going to be a mad rush from other countries to get this technology."

Soviets supplied much of the weaponry used by Iraq in the Persian Gulf War, but some of the technology used to develop Saddam's military through the years came from the United States, White said.

"Our soldiers overseas faced weapons our Commerce Department has allowed to be supplied," she said, adding it's certain to happen again in future conflicts unless COCOM tightens controls rather than continuing the pattern of loosening them.

Purportedly, the changes in the controls announced by the White House and Mosbacher would plug holes in the policies that allowed the department to approve \$1.5 billion worth of sensitive "dual-use" goods to Iraq in recent years. "Dual-use" items are such materials as chemicals that are used in common manufacturing processes but also could be used for weapons.

The new guidelines would not prohibit the sale of most sensitive materials, but would require anyone selling such goods to nations in the Middle East, Southwest Asia or other unstable regions around the world to be licensed and regulated by the federal government.

Violators face a \$1 million fine and up to 10 years in prison.

A White House statement hailed the measures as "a major step in ... continuing efforts to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction."

"Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against his own

Fashionable skirted traditional sleeper in a delightful pastel peach, blue, mint green and cream textured stripe \$1,299



Traditional loose pillow back sleeper in a colorful burgundy, navy, hunter green and gold plaid with ebony, peach, gold and violet accent stripes \$999



Open Sundays 1 to

2800 Fondren-

235 FM 196

7301 Clarewood—Suniland