

Spain cancels ?9.2 million deal to sell Saudis 400 precision bombs



Madrid, September 5 (RHC)-- The Spanish Ministry of Defense has announced that it will return the 9.2 million euros already paid by Saudi Arabia to buy 400 Spanish-made precision bombs amid fears that they could be used to target the innocent people of Yemen, the El Mundo reported.

The arms deal had been negotiated and finalized by former Spanish defense ministers Pedro Morenés Eulate and Maria Dolores de Cospedal. However, the recent deadly attack on a bus carrying Yemeni students, which killed 51 people including 40 children, prompted incumbent minister Margarita Robles to revise all arms deals with the Arab kingdom. The recent decision to freeze the bomb sale contract is said to be the first stage of the revision process.

Amnesty International says Spain is the fourth country on the list of major arms exporters to the Riyadh regime. In one of the most recent contracts, the Spanish state-owned shipbuilder Navantia signed a ?1.8-billion deal to sell five small warships to Saudi Arabia.

The deal was signed in April by Saudi Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman after his meeting with his then Spanish counterpart Cospedal in Madrid.

The Spanish defense ministry's decision to halt the arms deal it had earlier signed with Riyadh would open the door to the possibility that Spain would join countries such as Sweden, Canada, Finland,

Norway, Belgium or Germany, which have suspended their arms exports to the Saudi-led coalition.

According to media reports citing the Amnesty International, between 2015 and 2017, Spain reportedly exported 1.2 billion euros worth of military equipment to the coalition.

“There is extensive evidence that irresponsible arms flows to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition have resulted in enormous harm to Yemeni civilians. But this has not deterred the USA, the UK and other states, including France, Spain and Italy, from continuing transfers of billions of dollars’ worth of such arms. As well as devastating civilian lives, this makes a mockery of the global Arms Trade Treaty,” the Amnesty said.

Other reports said ever since Saudi Arabia launched the military operation in Yemen in 2015, its purchases of Spanish ammunition have nearly tripled, rising from ?34.7 million in 2016 to ?90.1 million in 2017.

The European Parliament has urged its member states to halt these sales on numerous occasions, admitting that the alliance led by Saudi Arabia violates international humanitarian law by using this weaponry in attacking the civilian population and bombing hospitals, markets and schools.

Saudi Arabia and its allies launched the war on Yemen in March 2015 to reinstall its former Riyadh-allied government. The military aggression has so far killed over 14,000 Yemenis and put millions on the verge of famine. It has also caused a deadly outbreak of cholera.

European countries like France and Britain have provided billions in weapons to the Saudi military amid international calls to halt their arms deals.

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