

# REPORT ON CZECH EXPORTS OF ARMS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN 2014

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NESEHNUTÍ – INDEPENDENT SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

The arms trade is one of the not so known aspects of Czech foreign politics. The public is informed about it only partially, if at all, and the arms trade is presented as a “success of the Czech economy” or “a contribution to the fight against terrorism”. Nevertheless, the increased amount of arms exports are according to various sources quite problematic. Too often it’s clear that in the interest of economic gain we arm dictators, send arms into areas with ongoing armed conflicts, or send arms to places that violate human rights. At the same time, arms prolong these conflicts for longer than necessary. In dictators’ hands arms become a tool for the oppression of minorities and pursuing aggression against neighbouring states.

In the proposed report we inform of the largest cases and trends concerning arms exports from the Czech Republic in the year 2014. We proceed from official statistics of Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic (MIT CR), as well as from cases published by the mainstream media.

All the mentioned trades, with the exception of an odd consignment to Iraq, were legal; more precisely they took place with the knowledge and permission of the Czech government, including the administration of MIT CR. Along with the MIT CR responsibility for Czech arms sales lie also with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic (MFA CR), a body which maintains *right of veto* over proposed sales and has to take into account the impact that arms consignments have on human rights in regions where the equipment is directed.

Despite the stated responsibility, however, economic interests are too often favoured in comparison to human rights protection.

## EXPORT OF CZECH ARMS IN 2014

Export of arms and military equipment from the Czech Republic has been increasing over the last several years. MIT CR’s statistics [1] indicate that in the year 2014 alone the financial value of exported arms has reached 11.6 billion Czech crowns (421.9 mil. €), which is about 4.5 billion crowns more than in year

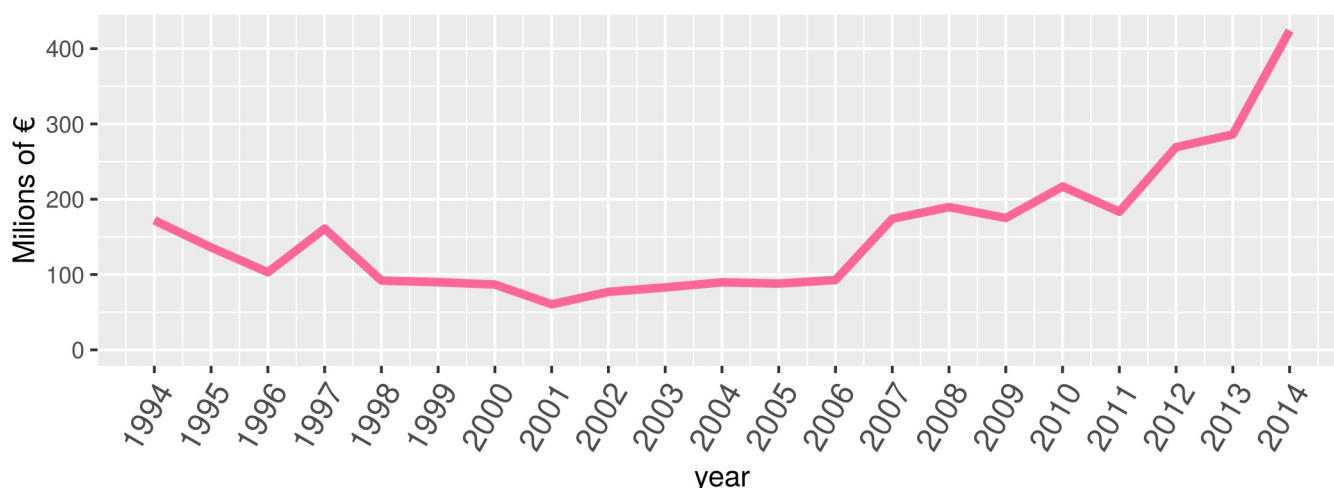


Fig. 1: Monetary value of weapons and military material exported from Czech republic between 1994 and 2014

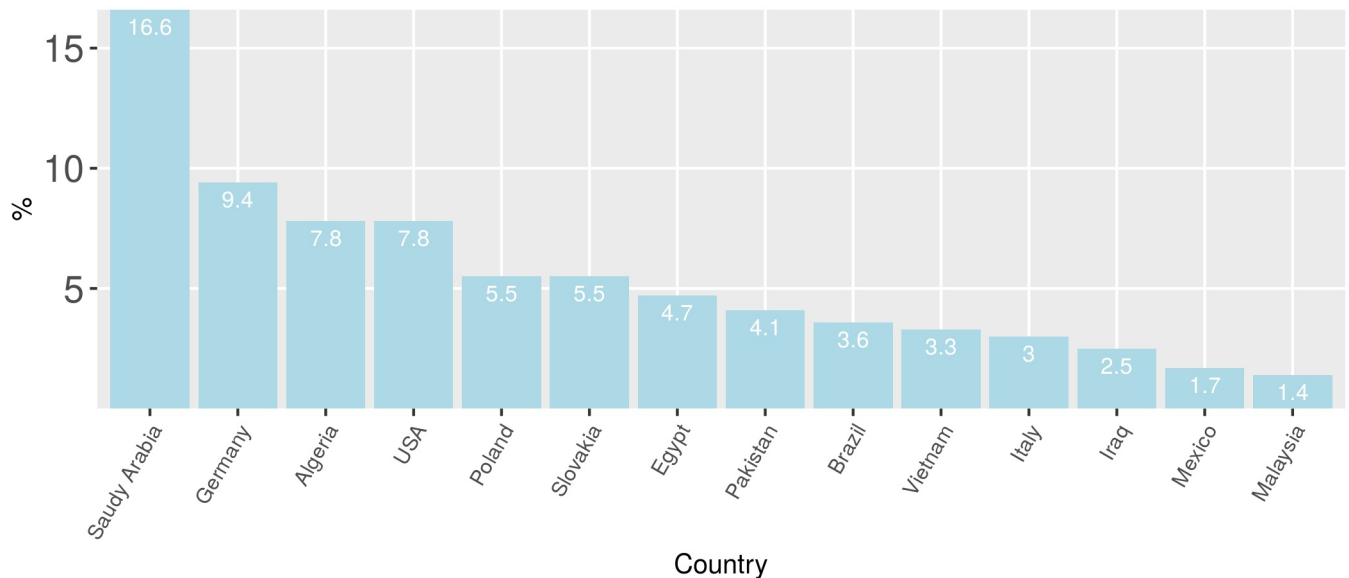


Fig. 2: Biggest importers of czech weapons and military material in 2014

2013. The largest portion of sales, 16%, was sold to **Saudi Arabia** (70 mil. €). The second-largest purchaser is the **USA** (33 mil. €) and the third is **Germany** (39 mil. €). The most Czech arms licences (64) were sold to **Israel**.

## ... AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Even though the Czech Republic is not ranked amongst the highest military exporters, the armament of various dictator-regimes or countries with low protection of human rights causes concerns. **Saudi Arabia**, where one of the world's most oppressive systems reigns, was the largest purchaser of Czech arms and military equipment in 2014. The top ten importers of the Czech arms include countries such as **Egypt**, **Algeria**, and **Vietnam**, the latter being ruled by a communist party.

More than a half of arms have ended up in countries that can be perceived as non-democratic, demonstrated through comparison of MIT CR official statistics with various indexes. For instance a comparison with the *World Press Freedom Index 2015* [2] shows that 53% of arms exported from the Czech Republic have been directed into countries which have been ranked in the two worst categories from the viewpoint of press freedom ("difficult situation" and "very difficult situation"). Similar numbers can be obtained from the *Freedom House Index* which assesses democracy index: 42.3% of Czech arms exports ended up in coun-

tries considered as "unfree" and another 11% was sold to "partially unfree" countries. [3]

It is important to also consider the political makeup of countries who purchase lower quantities of Czech arms. **Thailand** under the rule of junta (3 mil. €), **Bahrain** (352 000 €) or the **United Arab Emirates** (5.6 mil. €). Military equipment worth 1.9 mil. € was directed to the Republic of **Azerbaijan** which is under OSCE military embargo [4] and in whose prison cells there are human rights activists, lawyers and people from the not-profit sector. [5]

Most of the licenses, 64 in total, were given to **Israel** whose military invasion into Gaza in summer 2014 claimed more than 2,104 victims, out of which 1,462 were civilians. [6] For several decades the State of Israel has been oppressing the Palestinian population by occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

## CASES

### TRUCKS TO SAUDI-ARABIAN ARMY

The main reason why **Saudi Arabia** has become a main recipient of Czech weapons and military material in 2014 was the shipment of 300 TATRA army trucks to its army. The producer, from Kopřivnice, is even building a factory in Saudi now, allowing Saudis to be able to build these trucks themselves. According to

representatives of the company TATRA chassis will be used for howitzers bought in the future. In the same year the Czech Republic also provided Saudi Arabia with ammunition and parts of armoring. Export of weaponry to this country is increasing every year. From 2003 to present the export value has reached up to 98 milion €.

Saudi Arabia is one of the most repressive countries in the world. Free election does not exist there and commonly persecuted groups include the political opposition as well as religious, ethnic, and sexual minorities. There is a famous case of blogger Raif Badawi who was condemned for 10 years and ten thousand lashes, the equivalent of a sentence to death by torture, for establishing a discussion forum. By September 2015 there had been 130 state executions for the year. Many of those death verdicts were given for minor misdemeanours as adultery or sorcery. Out of 180 evaluated countries the organization *Reporters Without Borders* placed Saudi 164<sup>th</sup> in a report monitoring the freedom of the press. [6] The bombing of Yemen, currently ruled by rebels, is happening under the leadership of Saudi Arabia. Many civilians lost their lives because of these conflicts. *Amnesty International* criticizes Saudi Arabia for not setting adequate precautions against killing civilians. [7]

## CZECH HANDGUNS FOR EGYPTIAN MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

Export of weaponry to **Egypt** was important in the last year. Local police received thousands of handguns from the company *Česká Zbrojovka* and 10 million pieces of ammunition from the company *Sellier & Bellot*. Egyptian police participated in a massacre in August 2013 against demonstrators. In just a day several hundreds of people were killed. In reaction to this massacre the EU stopped the export of weapons to Egypt. The Czech Republic stopped respecting the recommendation after only six months. The situation concerning human rights did not change and in reality it was worsening. International human rights organizations such as *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International* declared that "during the past several months (after the toppling of Mursi), Egypt has witnessed so much state-in-



Attribution: Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic

Fig. 3: Military truck TATRA T-810 in camouflage of Czech Army

flicted violence and attacks on human rights as never before..." [8]

NESEHNUTÍ together with 15 other Czech and European human right organizations organised a protest against the export of weapons to Egypt. In an open letter [9] addressed to the MIT CR and MFA CR organisations argued that export of weapons to Egypt is against a *Declaration of the European Council 2008/944/SZBP*, [9] mainly against the second article of the declaration which says that member countries of the EU will "deny an export licence if there is a clear risk that the military technology or equipment to be exported might be used for internal repression;" Despite those protests the Czech Republic exported weapons to Egypt. MFA CR defended its approach as a way to participate in the "war against terrorism". [10]

## AN ODD SHIPMENT TO IRAQ

In November 2014, **Iraqis** detained a Russian aircraft with a shipment of weapons. The aircraft arrived to Iraq from the Czech Republic. According to official documentation the aircraft was transporting cigarettes however in actual fact it was carrying 40 tons of ammunition from the Czech Republic.

According to journal *Echo24.cz* [11], the first media reports claimed that the shipment was meant for the Kurdish militia. This information was refuted by an Iraqi army representative, claiming that the shipment was not even ordered by the Kurdish regional government. The shipment was heading to

Baghdad. The source cited by *Echo24.cz* speculated that the shipment might be heading to the Islamic state.

An official investigation has never been launched. MFA CR refused all invitations to comment on this subject.

## RUSSIAN ARMS EMBARGO VIOLATION

Czech armament companies violated an embargo imposed on **Russia** on July, 31 2014, according to *Czech television* information from March 2015. "It concerns sale contracts for hundreds of the latest weapons, especially submachine guns used by special forces," report *Czech television*, citing the Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*. Weapons were officially being delivered for gamekeepers. [12]

Eventually it became clear that the Czech Republic did not violate the embargo because it was only imposed on contracts concluded *after* the embargo became effective. This fact enabled the Czech Republic to import weapons to Russia till February 2015, long after the embargo became effective.

In this context it is appropriate to mention that other European countries postponed their even more significant deliveries. France, for example, cancelled an order of two Mistral-class amphibious assault ships in order to respect the embargo.

Czech armament lobby represented by *The Defence and Security Industry Association of the Czech Republic* commented the case with dismissive commentary: "A few semi-auto riffles and the Polish press creates an affair." [13]

## ...AND UKRAINE

At least three Czech companies violated an arms embargo imposed on **Ukraine** between 20 February and 16 July 2014, according to journal *idnes.cz*. All weapons delivered by these companies were exported with valid licenses. The MIT CR and the MFA CR stated that the licenses hadn't been granted for weapons' export as such. Even though the EU arms embargo hadn't come into force the Czech Republic guaranteed to abide by this embargo, according to *idnes.cz*. A representative of one of the firms stated the weapons were intended for the Ukrainian army. [14]

A procedure for the suspension of the three licenses for army material export to Ukraine was commenced in February 2015, six months after the embargo run out.

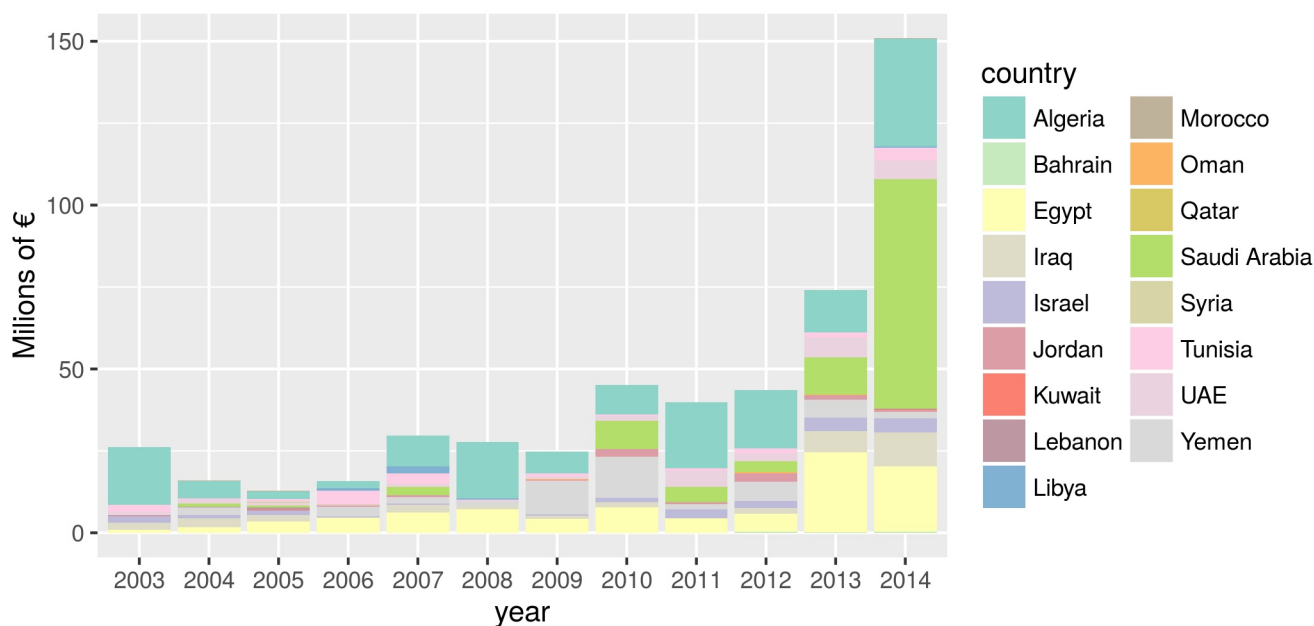


Fig. 4: Arms exports from Czech Republic to MENA region between 2003 and 2014

## NOTICES

- [1] Annual report on control of the export of military material, small arms for civilian use and dual-use goods and technology in the Czech Republic for 2014 – Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic. [www.mpo.cz](http://www.mpo.cz) (PDF)
- [2] 2015 World Press Freedom Index. [www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org)
- [3] Freedom in the World 2015. [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)
- [4] OSCE embargo on Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan). [www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes](http://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes)
- [5] Ázerbájdžán v lidskoprávním hledáčku před zahájením Evropských her. [www.amnesty.cz](http://www.amnesty.cz)
- [6] Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency Situation Report. [www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)
- [7] 2015 World Press Freedom Index. [www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org)
- [8] Egypt three years on, wide-scale repression continues unabated. [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)
- [9] Open letter of NESEHNUTÍ regarding the export of Czech handguns and ammo to Egypt. [www.zbrane.nesehnuti.cz](http://www.zbrane.nesehnuti.cz)
- [10] Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment. [www.eur-lex.europa.eu](http://www.eur-lex.europa.eu)
- [11] Odpověď ministerstva zahraničních věcí na náš otevřený dopis k Egyptu. [www.zbrane.nesehnuti.cz](http://www.zbrane.nesehnuti.cz)
- [12] V USA řeší Babiše. Exdůstojník CIA před ním varuje. [www.echo24.cz](http://www.echo24.cz)
- [13] Z Česka prý míří do Ruska americké či německé zbraně - oficiálně pro myslivce. [www.ceskatelevize.cz](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz)
- [14] The Defence and Security Industry Association of the Czech Republic. <https://www.facebook.com/DSIACR>
- [15] České firmy dovážely zbraně na Ukrajinu, o licence přišly až nyní. [www.idnes.cz](http://www.idnes.cz)

## NESEHNUTÍ – INDEPENDENT SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MOVEMENT

The non-governmental non-profit organization NESEHNUTÍ was established in Brno in 1997 and since then has aimed at involving the general public in decision-making processes and organize educational activities about important social topics, e.g. protecting the environment, human rights and equal opportunities.

The objective of our activities is to show that social change based on respect for people, animals and nature is possible and must come from below first—from active people who are interested in what's happening in the world around them. Social change is possible from people who recognize that shared responsibility for life on our planet is an inextricable part of their freedom.

Since it's establishing NESEHNUTÍ is monitoring and publicising exports of Czech arms licensed – or even directly implemented – by the state to regions where armed conflicts and (or) mass violation of human rights are taking place. We are trying to increase public awareness and initiate a public discussion on this topic in order to stop this shameful practice.

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