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**HEADLINE:** U.S. scorned for foreign arms stand

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**HIGHLIGHT:**

Letting North Korea ship Scuds called hypocritical Democrat accuses Bush of being inconsistent

**BODY:**

What's a definition of irony?

It's the United States - the world's largest weapons seller and heartiest participant in the international arms bazaar - complaining about North Korea shipping 15 Scud missiles to Yemen, according to peace activists.

For Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to call North Korea the "single largest proliferator" of missile technology is, as they say, the pot calling the kettle black.

"I guess you've got to remember that irony is essentially dead in the United States," said Scott Lynch, from Washington-based Peace Action. "But even so, this one has got to be seen as highly ironic. One could even move up to hypocritical."

Rumsfeld's reaction, buttressed by Bush administration officials throughout the day yesterday, came after Spanish authorities discovered the Scud missiles, infamous for their attempted use against Israel by Iraq's Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Gulf War, in a cargo ship in the Arabian Sea. Ultimately, the ship was allowed to sail on its way after U.S. officials said there was no legal basis under international law to detain them.

"The audacity of the administration never fails to shock me. The U.S. needs Yemen as a partner in the region," added Lynch. With President George W. Bush pushing for a second war against Iraq, "they can't afford to piss off Yemen, and that is cynical ...

"At the end of the day, the administration deigns unto itself the right to make the rules for everybody."

On Capitol Hill yesterday, several lawmakers also saw a certain irony in U.S. criticism of North Korea, followed by an abrupt and red-faced announcement that the shipment would not be stopped.

Massachusetts Democratic Representative Edward Markey accused Bush of being "dangerously inconsistent" for allowing the Scuds, along with 15 conventional warheads and assorted drums of chemicals, to proceed to Yemen.

"(He is) tough on Iraq, diffident on North Korea, ineffective in Iran, and hypocritical at home in initiating the development of 'mini-nuke' weapons, plutonium pits and other signs of our insincerity towards curtailing our own (weapons of mass destruction) technology," he told

Reuters.

"Let's not compound this further."

Bruce Campbell, from the Centre for Policy Alternatives, an Ottawa-based think tank, said that the Scud controversy was an example of "do as I say, not as I do."

According to U.N. statistics for 1996-2001, the U.S. dominated the global arms bazaar, delivering 45 per cent of conventional weapons sales.

In 2000, the U.S. netted \$14 billion (U.S.) in arms sales, double its closest competitors, Britain and Russia.

"It just seems as if they want to protect their territory from up-comers like North Korea," said Campbell. "It's a double standard. It's about proprietary rights rather than outrage about what's actually being sold."

The view of the U.S. administration appears to be that "it's our God-given right to police the world, and never mind the contradictions," said Campbell.

U.S. policy is certainly awash in contradictions, agrees Steven Staples, arms and security expert for the policy group, Polaris, based in Ottawa.

"They are preparing to go to war with Iraq even though no substantive link has been found between Iraq and Al Qaeda. Meanwhile, North Korea admits it does have a weapons-of-mass-destruction program, and the U.S. isn't doing anything," he said.

"Furthermore, the U.S. has been arming the Middle East for decades. In fact, the United States helped arm Saddam himself," he said, referring to the 1980s when Saddam was a U.S. ally in the region and the Iran was considered the biggest threat. Many of Saddam's war crimes, now cited by Bush as reasons to go to war, were carried out during the days of friendly ties with Washington.

"The U.S. is in no position politically or ethically to bring peace to the region," said Staples. "My strongest hope is that the United Nations will hold out against the war. We are literally dangling by a thread between peace and war now, with the U.N. in the balance."

Staples believes it will be a particularly difficult situation for Canada if the U.S. goes to war without U.N. support. That's because Canadian warships are already in the region as part of an international coalition under American leadership to enforce sanctions against Iraq.

"It's much trickier politically to actually pull your forces out, than to join a campaign," he said. "It will be very interesting to see what Ottawa will do (in those circumstances)."

At Washington's Center for Arms Control, analyst Eric Floden agreed that Washington has no business criticizing other countries for doing what it does.

"It's simple," he said. "The bottom line is that the U.S. doesn't want any country to buy weapons from anybody else, and it wants to dictate who can buy weapons and who can't."

For example, Bush administration officials said Monday the U.S. will sell equipment to the military-backed government of Algeria to help combat Islamic militants. That makes Algeria just the most recent nation in a long list of countries who buy arms from the U.S., despite criticism from human rights groups.

Richard Sanders, co-ordinator of the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade, says it's unfortunate that the irony of the U.S. position doesn't jump out at people.

"To us, it's mind-boggling," he said from Ottawa. "The U.S. sells the world's largest volume of weapons to more countries than anybody else, they have 1.5 million troops stationed around the world, they spend more than \$500 billion (U.S.) a year on the military budget ... they just fought a war against Afghanistan and they are ready to bomb Iraq," he said. "I guess it's not the kind of irony you laugh at."

Final comment must go to Toronto's Matthew Behrens.

"We find the situation very ironic, given that we went to jail," he said last night.

On Tuesday, Behrens, along with 25 anti-war protesters from Raging Grannies to a 7-year-old, showed up at the gates of Burlington's Wescam Inc. The company makes communications equipment with military applications, and is being purchased by L-3 Communications Holdings Inc., a major supplier to the U.S. defence department.

The aim, according to Behrens, was to "conduct a citizens' weapons inspection of the facility," just as U.N. inspectors are inspecting installations in Iraq. It wasn't even a surprise visit, according to Behrens, whose organization, Homes Not Bombs, sent a letter to the company last week.

But when they showed up, police cruisers were on the site and Behrens and two colleagues were taken to the Halton Regional Police Station and charged with trespassing.

"While U.N. inspectors have enjoyed unfettered (and often unannounced) access to a host of suspected Iraqi weapons production sites," the Canadian protestors ended their attempted inspection with a "free ride in handcuffs down to the local police station," said the group said yesterday in a statement.

"It was a clear indication of the hypocrisy that underscores the demands of nations which are armed (and arming) to the teeth that only one nation be disarmed."

Behrens said the three accused plan to fight the charges in court.

**GRAPHIC:** KIM KYUNG-HOON/REUTERS South Korean visitors look at various missiles at the war museum in Seoul yesterday. Spanish warships have intercepted a North Korean ship carrying hidden Scud missiles to Yemen, but the U. S. said there was no basis in international law to detain the shipment. KIM KYUNG-HOON/REUTERS South Korean visitors look at various missiles at the war museum in Seoul yesterday. Spanish warships have intercepted a North Korean ship carrying hidden Scud missiles to Yemen, but the U. S. said there was no basis in international law to detain the shipment.

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