

Headlines

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Published on Tuesday, July 25, 2006 by the [Independent/UK](#)

UK: Calls For Weapons Embargo on Israeli

by Colin Brown

Tony Blair faced new demands to suspend all arms exports to Israel amid warnings that Tel Aviv was guilty of "disproportionate" attacks on Lebanon.

The Liberal Democrat leader, Sir Menzies Campbell, called for a freeze on all arms export licences after government figures showed that British arms sales to Israel more than doubled last year to £22.5m.

Exports included components for military aircraft head-up displays, components for electronic warfare equipment and components for naval radar. Arms campaigners have called for an embargo on military exports to Israel, arguing that they breach British guidelines aimed at limited arms sales to volatile regions.


Yesterday, Sir Menzies said a freeze on exports was justified "in light of disproportionate military action by Israel in Lebanon and Gaza". He added: "The Government is right to ensure there are no arms transfers, either direct or indirect, from the UK to Syria, Iran or illegal armed groups such as the military wing of Hizbollah ... The Government must now comply with its own arms export rules and institute an immediate suspension of all UK arms exports to Israel."

Asked about the demand yesterday, Mr Blair said: "I'm not going to make any comment on the Liberal Democrat thing."

Almost two-thirds of the British public opposes Tony Blair's "special" relationship with George Bush, according to a Guardian/ICM poll published today; 30 per cent said the relationship was balanced while 63 per cent thought it was too close. And 61 per cent said Israel's attacks in Lebanon had been disproportionate.

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