

12. ARMS TRANSFERS

BACKGROUND

A previous steady decline in the global arms trade was reversed by an increase of nine percent in 1987. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the global trade in major weapons was valued at approximately US \$35.1 billion (all figures are in 1985 US dollars), up from US \$32.3 billion in 1986.¹ The Institute attributes the 1987 increase to "sudden" US and Soviet deliveries of fighter aircraft ordered in the early 1980s. However, it also predicts that with a scarcity of new orders, future deliveries will decline.²

There was also a marked increase in the value of arms sales to Third World countries; these countries continue to be the biggest recipients of conventional arms. In 1986, the value of weapons delivered to developing countries was US \$21.3 billion. By comparison, in 1987 the value increased to US \$24.7 billion--accounting for seventy percent of the total global market of arms imports.³ The leading importer of major weapons in the Third World is the Middle East, with 1987 transfers estimated at US \$11.5 billion. It is followed by South Asia (US \$6.1 billion), the Far East (US \$2.4 billion), South America (US \$1.9 billion), Sub-Saharan Africa (US \$1.8 billion), North Africa (US \$479 million), Central America (US \$316 million) and South Africa (US \$8 million).⁴ Among individual countries, India ranked as the world's leading arms importer in 1987 with purchases estimated at US \$5.2 billion. It was followed by Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Syria and Angola.⁵

The largest exporters of major weapons to the developing countries are the USSR (US \$9.7 billion), the USA (US \$5.9 billion), France (US \$3.2 billion), the UK (US \$1.65 billion) and China (US \$1.04 billion). These leading exporters together account for over eighty percent of all global deliveries.⁶ For China, it was the first time that it was one of the world's five largest arms exporters to developing countries.⁷

The Soviet Union (US \$12.3 billion), the US (US \$11.5 billion) and three NATO countries--France (US \$3.6 billion), the UK (US \$1.8 billion) and West Germany (US \$1.4

1 *SIPRI World Armaments and Disarmament Yearbook, 1988*. London: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 176.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

7 *Ibid.*