

Rep. Rothman to President Sarkozy: Reconsider Arms Deal with Lebanese Armed Forces

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 29, 2010

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Washington, DC - Representative Steve Rothman (D-NJ), a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittees on Defense, and State and Foreign Operations, sent the following letter to French President Nicolas Sarkozy requesting that France reconsider its reported plans to sell anti-tank missiles to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

The full text of the letter:

President Nicolas Sarkozy

Elysée Palace

55 rue Faubourg Saint Honoré

75008 Paris

Dear President Sarkozy,

First, I would like welcome you in advance of your visit this coming January. The United States and France have been longstanding allies and friends and I look forward to continuing to work with you to advance the common goals of both our countries.

In this spirit of friendship, I wish to highlight an issue that has recently come to my attention. Reports have been circulating in the past few days stating that France plans to sell 100 Haut subsonique Optiquement Téléguidé Tiré d'un Tube (HOT) anti-tank missile systems to Lebanon by the end of February, 2011.

As you know, Lebanon is in a

precarious situation whereby Hezbollah is in a powerful position to usurp the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). If this were to occur, Israel would be in grave danger of having your anti-tank missiles used against her. I agree in principle that strengthening the LAF against Hezbollah is an important goal, but I believe that providing the LAF with anti-tank missiles is neither helpful nor necessary in that regard.

The stakes are too high, and the danger this would pose to Israel is far too real. I therefore respectfully request that you reconsider this arms deal of anti-tank missiles and seek to aid the LAF in other ways.

I thank you for your consideration, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

STEVEN R. ROTHMAN

Member of Congress

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