**China seeks to block U.N. report on its weapons in Darfur**

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UNITED NATIONS - China has mounted a strenuous diplomatic campaign to block the publication of a U.N. report that claims that Chinese ammunition has been shipped into Darfur in the past year, in clear violation of U.N. sanctions, according to several U.N. diplomatic sources.

The report does not claim that Chinese arms dealers knew that their ammunition was being sent to the western region of Sudan. But the findings provide some of the strongest evidence to date that Khartoum has routinely channeled imported arms and ammunition from China into Darfur, where the Sudanese government is engaged in a military campaign against rebels.

Sudan has been under a comprehensive U.N. arms embargo for six years. But at a briefing this month, a U.N. panel responsible for implementing the embargo told the Security Council that Sudanese forces have used more than a dozen types of Chinese ammunition against Darfurian rebels over the past two years.

The panel also reported finding recently manufactured shell casings from Chinese ammunition at the site of numerous attacks launched by unidentified assailants against peacekeepers from the joint U.N.-African Union mission.

"These were very concrete allegations against the Chinese," said a U.N.-based diplomat familiar with the issue. "The Chinese don't want the report to be published."

Under the terms of the U.N. arms embargo, Khartoum is allowed to purchase weapons abroad, as long as they are not used in its military operations in Darfur. But the report found that the Sudanese government had routinely skirted the sanctions - using recently purchased Russian helicopters, Sukhoi 25 fighter planes from Belarus and at least one Russian MiG-20 fighter jet in Darfur.

China responded angrily to the revelations, insisting it would block the public release of the report unless the findings were rewritten, according to diplomats, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the dispute.

A spokesman for the Chinese mission to the United Nations, Liu Yutong, did not respond to a request for comment. But on Thursday, a Chinese diplomat, Yang Tao, told the Security Council that China had "serious concerns" about the report and believed "there is much room for improvement."

"We urge the panel of experts to conduct its work under the principles of objectivity and responsibility," Yang said.

The U.N. sanctions panel has repeatedly alleged that large amounts of foreign ammunition and weapons, principally from China and Chad, have illegally made their way into Darfur in recent years, fueling a conflict that has left more than 300,000 dead and driven more than 2.7 million from their homes.

Last year, the former head of the panel, Enrico Carisch, testified before Congress that the Security Council had failed to act on more than 100 panel recommendations aimed at strengthening the sanctions. He also faulted the United States, France and Britain for doing little to force a more public debate.

But the panel's report showed how difficult it is to enforce the sanctions. For instance, Russia has sold some 36 Mi-24 and Mi-17 helicopters to Khartoum since 2009, while Belarus has sold 15 Sukhoi 25 jets to the Sudanese government since 2008, according to the panel. Sudan signed end-user agreements with both governments guaranteeing that the aircraft would not be used in Darfur.

Sudan acknowledged to the panel that it had transferred some of the aircraft into Darfur, but insisted that the aircraft had not been used in military operations and therefore did not violate sanctions.

The panel uncovered a total of 18 varieties of shell casings, including 12 from China and four from Sudan. Two samples of ammunition - which were used by the Justice and Equality Movement, one of the main rebel groups - were manufactured in Israel. The panel said that Israel confirmed that the ammunition was sold to the government of Chad. Chad - which also signed an end-user agreement with Israel not to ship the arms to a third country - has long been accused of smuggling weapons to JEM.