

Canada resuming arms exports to Saudis despite criticism



Ottawa, April 10 (RHC)-- Canadian authorities say they have found a way around bans on the controversial weapons exports to Saudi Arabia despite growing calls for a full halt to sales of arms to a regime involved in numerous cases of human rights violations.

Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said that his government has renegotiated a contract to sell General Dynamics Corp armored vehicles to Saudi Arabia. Champagne said that Canada was lifting a freeze imposed in November 2018 that banned new permits for arms sale to the Saudis pending a review.

The renegotiation of the deal on the armored vehicles section of the General Dynamics Corp, a U.S.-based company, is expected to face huge criticism from human rights campaigners and governments who believe the \$14 billion contract should be scrapped for good.

Opponents believe the Saudi government has violated the very basics of the human rights by killing tens of thousands of civilians in its years-long war on Yemen. They also cite the brutal murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi as a justification for scrapping the deal, which was originally signed in 2014 by a previous Conservative government in Canada.

However, Champagne said thousands of jobs would be created in Canada as a result of the “significant improvements” made to the massive arms deal. The top Canadian diplomat added that Ottawa would have the right under the renegotiated deal to delay or cancel permits without penalty if it was found out that the Saudis were not using the armored vehicles for their stated purpose.

Champagne said that the Canadian government had already begun reviewing permit applications on a case-by-case basis.

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