

Israel releases ship after unloading weapons

Contributed by Egypt News
Thursday, 05 November 2009

Israeli authorities on Thursday released an intercepted ship after unloading a large amount of weapons on board that the Jewish state said were meant for one of its enemies, according to JERUSALEM

The cargo ship, operated by a Cyprus-based company, was set to continue its voyage to Turkey and then to Egypt, and its crew were cleared of any connection to the weapons that were disguised as civilian goods, reported local daily Ha'aretz.

Prior to the green light, Israel conducted a thorough inspection of the vessel and unloaded about 500 tons of a variety of weapons and ammunition, added the report. Local officials were quoted as saying that the weapons were originally from Iran and on their way to the Lebanese group of Hezbollah.

Israeli commandos intercepted the ship late Tuesday night about 100 miles off the Israeli coast and found tons of weapons, including anti-tank missiles and rockets, in an initial check, before they escorted the vessel to the southern Israeli port of Ashdod for further inspection.

In response, Hezbollah denied any link to the seized weapons, and meanwhile condemned the Israeli operation as piracy in international waters.

Following what Israeli leaders hailed as "another success" in its efforts to cut arms supply for its enemies, the Jewish state swiftly staged a public relations campaign against Iran and what the Jewish state called Iran's proxies, including Syria and Hezbollah.

Israel's Foreign Ministry invited foreign ambassadors to watch the seized weapons, and instructed its embassies and consulates around the world to use this incident to direct international pressure toward Iran, according to Ha'aretz.

The Jewish state stressed one of its constant accusations that the Islamic republic, which it sees as an existential threat, is violating United Nations Security Council resolutions that forbid it from supplying Syria or Hezbollah with weapons.

Israel has been on high alert in nearby waters for years out of arms-trafficking concerns. Since the conclusion of its winter military operation against the Palestinian movement of Hamas, which Israel also sees as a proxy of Iran, in the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces have beefed up routine and extensive patrols and reconnaissance in the Mediterranean and Red Sea.

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