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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



EDWARD R. ROYCE
Fortieth District-California

April 19, 2011

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am writing to express my serious concern over the proliferation of dangerous weapons as a result of the upheaval in Libya. I ask that your Department be engaged on this issue, and stand ready with a robust response.

I have had a long standing concern about the proliferation of shoulder-fired missiles and the threat they pose to civilian aviation if they fall into the wrong hands. In recent years, my Subcommittee has led efforts in the House to bring attention to the threat from these weapons and backed efforts by State to secure or destroy shoulder-fired missiles that are vulnerable to theft, loss or diversion around the world. Unfortunately, due to unsteady diplomatic relations, it is my understanding that this program was unable to be established with Libya.

Given the threat from these weapons, General Carter Ham's recent testimony before Congress is quite alarming. As you know, Gen. Ham testified that there were "perhaps as many as 20,000 [shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles] in Libya as the operation began." He added that "many" are not accounted for and will be a "concern for some time." If General Ham's assessment is correct, it could dramatically change the U.S. Government's estimate of the number of these weapons outside of governments' control. While many of these appear to be aging missiles, there are reports of more advanced systems in Libya. NGOs have pointed to the looting of weapons facilities and there are reports of these weapons making their way into the hands of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. These weapons are a commodity, worth thousands or tens of thousands of dollars a piece on the black market.

During your conversations with the Transitional National Council, I would urge you to emphasize the importance of maintaining control over stockpiles in areas of the country under the opposition's control. The Department should be in contact with neighboring countries to exercise vigilance in locating and securing any missiles that may be transiting out of Libya. I would also encourage the U.S. Government to be ready to assist a new Libyan government with an aggressive missile destruction and recovery program. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "E. Royce".

EDWARD R. ROYCE
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade

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