

South Africa sold weapons to Lebanese Christian militia: report

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JOHANNESBURG, Jan 17 (AFP) - South Africa sold more than two million dollars worth of armaments to the Christian militia in Lebanon in June 1992, defying a UN arms embargo during the apartheid era, an official for the state-run arms manufacturer said Tuesday.

The consignment included missiles, ammunition, silencers and night-sight equipment, Armscor marketing official Deon Bronkhorst told a commission probing Armscor's dealings in the years before South Africa's transfer to majority rule when a UN embargo was in place.

Bronkhorst said he had met Christian militia representative Eli Wazan in April 1992 to negotiate the deal, but refused to elaborate on the transaction.

He added that Armscor had also sold about 40,000 British-made Lee-Enfield rifles to US citizen Michael Steenberg who planned to sell them

as "collector's items."

"Apparently people in the United States collect anything," Bronkhorst said.

After more than two decades of secrecy, Armscor is struggling to shed the unsavoury image it developed under the apartheid rule that ended with the April elections.

Armscor has acknowledged that it helped arm Iraq during its war with Iran as well as selling weapons to the government of Rwanda, where an ethnic bloodbath between the majority Hutus and minority Tutsis resulted in more than a million deaths.

The arms manufacturer admitted last year that South Africa imported and exported armaments and weapons technology during the apartheid era, in defiance of a UN embargo.

A 1977 UN resolution was a mandatory prohibition on arms sales to South Africa, while a 1984 res-

olution banned purchases of South African weapons. May 25 last year to repeal the resolutions.

The UN security council voted on st/fc AFP AFP