

Swedish Radio reveals: Sweden plans secret arms factory in Saudi Arabia

The Swedish Defence Research Agency, FOI has far-reaching plans to help Saudi Arabia build an advanced arms factory for anti tank missiles in Saudi Arabia.

Project Simoom, as it is called internally at FoI and in the Government Offices, started 2007 but has been kept secret from the public.

This is revealed by an investigation made by the Swedish public service radio broadcaster Swedish Radio (Sveriges Radio), based on hundreds of classified documents and interviews with key players.

According to human rights organizations Saudi Arabia is one of the world's cruellest dictatorships. The regime frequently violates human rights. Nevertheless, Sweden has a military cooperation with the country. The cooperation has resulted in several arms deals in the recent years.

But what is not known is that the Swedish Defence Research Agency, FOI also helps the regime in Saudi Arabia to build a SELF-arms industry.

The first step is a missile factory in the desert - the first of its kind in the country.

The construction of the factory has not yet begun, but the planning has been going on since 2007.

The fact that an authority such as FOI is involved in the planning of a weapons factory for a government in a dictatorship such as Saudi Arabia is quite unique.

Secret government documents state that "the project pushes the boundaries of what is possible for a Swedish authority."

"Project Simoom", as it is called, is classified "secret". FOI General director Jan Olof Lind do not even want to admit it's existence.

"We do not have a project agreement with that country", he said.

Has there been a project Simoom?

"No. And I do not wish to comment on discussions that may or may not have occurred between Sweden and Saudi Arabia. These discussions are classified."

But according to a large number of classified documents obtained by the Swedish Radio through various sources, FOI experts travelled to Saudi Arabia to study soil conditions at the site where the plant would be located as early as 2008.

An initial report was delivered to a Saudi courier, code name: "the engineer". The report describes in detail how the Saudis are to proceed to build the factory and which companies are able to deliver the products necessary. The project is, according to the documents, worth several hundred million dollars. The facility is to consist of up to 35 buildings.

The existence of the project is confirmed to the Swedish Radio by several former employees of FOI.

They claim that the Swedish government is fully informed about the project.

State Secretary Håkan Jevrell The Department of Defense, would not answer any questions about the project.

“These discussions- if they exist -are classified”, he claimed.

According to our sources, the construction of the factory has not yet begun, but experts from Foi are soon on their way to Saudi Arabia to continue the discussions.

Jan Erik Lövgren deputy director general of the National Inspectorate of Strategic Products ISP the authority granting permission for arms exports in Sweden, confirmed to Swedish Radio that Foi is still involved in plans to build the factory in Saudi Arabia.

“There is an ongoing dialogue”, he said.

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