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Bombs bound for Israel came via British airports

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Ministers are embroiled in a row over whether British military equipment and airports are being used to assist Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

MPs called on Margaret Beckett, the Foreign Secretary, to ensure that arms made in Britain were not being used in the violence in the Middle East, amid warnings that Israeli F-16 warplanes flying sorties across the border may contain British parts.

Last night Mrs Beckett said she had protested to the American government after it emerged that two cargo planes loaded with 5,000lb "bunker-buster" bombs bound for Israel had stopped over at Prestwick airport near Glasgow.

She told Channel Four News: "I am not happy about it. Not least because it appears that in so far as there are procedures for handling of that kind of cargo hazardous cargoes irrespective of what they are it does appear that they were not followed. I have already let the United States know that this is an issue that appears to be seriously at fault: that we will be making a formal protest if it appears that that is what has happened."

But she faced criticism over officials' monitoring of British military components exported to Israel. Under strict British rules governing arms exports, military equipment should not be used for internal oppression or external aggression. According to BBC2's Newsnight, the United States has lodged requests for two planes carrying missiles to make stop-overs in the UK in the coming fortnight.

The Foreign Office insisted it had "no reports that UK-supplied equipment is being deployed by Israel in Gaza" in a way inconsistent with controls on international arms sales.

Tony Blair was also criticised by his former adviser, Sir Stephen Wall, for having a "bunker" mentality in his support of George Bush over Israel.