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30 June 2025

ENGLISH only



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Defence,
Civil Protection and Sport DDPS

Swiss Armed Forces
Armed Forces Staff AFS

Note 23-2025-OSCE

30 June 2025

OSCE / Information Exchange on Conventional Arms Transfers and Related Technology 2024

"The Delegation of Switzerland to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe presents its compliments to all Delegations of Participating States to the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation in Vienna and to the Secretariat of the Conflict Prevention Centre and has the honour, with reference to the FSC.DEC/8/08 FSC.DEC/10/02, FSC.DEC/8/98, FSC.DEC/13/97 and FSC.DEC/20/95, to enclose the following information:

Response of Switzerland to the Questionnaire on Participating States' Policy and/or National Practices and Procedures for the Export of Conventional Arms and Related Technology, as of 30 June 2025.

Switzerland does not provide a physical version of the information exchange on "conventional arms transfers" and "military holdings" for calendar year 2024 since related information is available electronically on the following website:

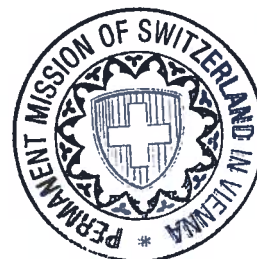
<https://www.unroca.org/switzerland/report/2023/>

The Delegation of Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to all other Delegations of Participating States to the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation in Vienna and to the Secretariat of the Conflict Prevention Centre the assurance of its highest consideration.

Vienna, 30 June 2025

To all Delegations to the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation
To the Secretariat of the Conflict Prevention Centre

Vienna





Switzerland

OSCE Questionnaire on Practices and Procedures for the Export of CAT (FSC.DEC/20/95)

30 June 2025

Information related to conventional arms transfers (imports and exports) and the military holdings for the reporting year 2024 can be found on <https://www.unroca.org/switzerland/report/2024/>.

The export control of war material is – with one exception – subject to the Federal Act on War Materiel (WMA) and the corresponding Ordinance on War Materiel (WMO). Non-commercial exports of firearms, their components and accessories, and their ammunition and munitions components destined to Schengen member states fall within the scope of the Federal Act on Weapons, Weapons Accessories and Ammunition (Weapons Act, WA).

The following responses refer to the regulations of the legislation on war material unless noted otherwise.

1. Basic principles, policies and/or national practices on the export of conventional arms and related technology

According to article 22 WMA the manufacture, brokerage, export and transit of war material for recipients abroad shall be authorized if this is not contrary to international law, international obligations, and the principles of Swiss foreign policy.

Article 22a WMA states the licensing criteria for export trade:

¹ *In assessing an application for an export licence under Article 22 and for entering into contracts under Article 20, the following must be taken into consideration:*

- a. *maintaining peace, international security and regional stability;*
- b. *the situation within the country of destination; in particular, respect for human rights and the non-use of child soldiers shall be taken into consideration;*
- c. *Switzerland's efforts in relation to development cooperation; in particular the possibility that the country of destination appears as one of the Least Developed Countries on the up-to-date list of development assistance recipients issued by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD DAC List);*
- d. *the behaviour of the country of destination vis-à-vis the international community, in particular with regard to compliance with international law;*
- e. *the views of countries that participate with Switzerland in international export control regimes.*

² *Export trade under Article 22 and entering into agreements under Article 20 shall not be authorised if:*

- a. *the country of destination is involved in an internal or international armed conflict;*
- b. *the country of destination commits serious and systematic violations of human rights;*
- c. *there is a high risk that the war material to be exported will be used against the civilian population in the country of destination; or*
- d. *there is a high risk that the war material to be exported will be passed on to undesirable end recipients in the country of destination.*

³ *In derogation from paragraphs 1 and 2, authorisation may be granted for individual handguns and small firearms of any calibre with the related ammunition, provided the weapons are intended to be used exclusively for private or sporting purposes.*

⁴ *In derogation from paragraph 2, authorisation may be granted for export trade for operations that foster peace that are carried out on the basis of a mandate from the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or a supranational organisation whose objective is to promote peace.*

For a licence to be granted for the export of finished products or for individual parts or assembly packages to a foreign government or an undertaking acting on behalf of a foreign government, a non-re-export declaration from the government of the country of destination is required. The requirement for a non-re-export declaration is waived if the case involves individual parts or assembly packages of negligible value.

By issuing the non-re-export declaration, the country of destination undertakes not to export, sell, lend, or gift the war materiel authority or to transfer it in any other way to third parties abroad without the consent of the licensing authority.

If there is an increased risk in the country of destination that the war materiel to be exported will be passed on to an undesirable end recipient, the licensing authority may stipulate that it has the right to verify compliance with the non-re-export declaration on site (Post-Shipment Verification (PSV)). In the case of export of substantial volume, a non-re-export declaration in the form of a diplomatic note from the country of destination is required.

If there is evidence that the non-re-export declaration has been violated, the licensing authority may take precautionary measures. The Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research decides whether a licence should be revoked.

In the case of small arms and light weapons, SALW (including their ammunition and hand grenades), the licensing authority usually requests the end-user to confirm in the EUC respectively in the non-re-export declaration that the SALW will not be used against the civilian population in an offensive manner.

A non-re-export declaration may be waived in the case of individual parts or assembly packages of war materiel if it is established that, once abroad, they will be integrated into a product and not re-exported unmodified, or in the case of anonymous components, that their value in comparison with the finished war materiel is negligible.

Any person who wishes to export war materiel to a body that is neither a foreign government nor an undertaking acting on behalf of a foreign government must demonstrate when filing the export licence application that the required authorisation for import has been issued by the country of final destination or that no such authorisation is required.

2. National legislation governing the export of conventional arms and related technology

The national legislation encompasses:

- Federal Act on War Materiel (War Materiel Act, WMA, SR 514.51) and the corresponding War Materiel Ordinance (WMO, SR 514.511);
- Federal Act on the Implementation of International Sanctions (Embargo Act, EmbA, SR 946.231) and corresponding ordinances;
- Federal Act on Weapons, Accessories and Ammunition (Weapons Act, WA, SR 514.54) and the corresponding Ordinance on Weapons, Accessories and Ammunition (Weapons Ordinance, WO, SR 514.541).

3. International agreements or guidelines, other than OSCE commitments, covering the export of conventional arms to which Switzerland is a party

Switzerland participates in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The first reply to the Register has been submitted in 1993 for the year 1992. Since then, Switzerland submits its replies to the Register on an annual basis.

Switzerland may enact compulsory measures in order to implement sanctions (i.e. ordered by the UN, the OSCE or by Switzerland's most significant trading partners) which serve to secure compliance with international law, and in particular the respect of human rights. The granting of licences is not permitted if such enforcement measures in terms of the Federal Act on the Implementation of International Sanctions (Embargo Act) have been ordered.

Furthermore, Switzerland participates in the Wassenaar Arrangement, which has been established in order to contribute to regional and international security and stability, by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilizing accumulations. Switzerland is also a State Party to the Arms Trade Treaty, which aims at establishing the highest possible common international standards for regulating the international trade in conventional arms as well as preventing and eradicating the illicit trade in conventional arms including preventing their diversion.

4. Procedures for processing an application to export conventional arms and related technology

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) decides on export licences in agreement with the responsible offices of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Additional consultations are conducted with the responsible offices of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport in the case of security policy or procurement policy matters; the Federal Intelligence Service in the case of significant licensing proceedings (these can include export licences for significant quantities, specific types of goods and/or to particular recipients). If deemed significant to foreign policy and/or security policy, export requests must be submitted to the Federal Council (the Swiss government) for a decision (art. 29 para. 2 WMA). If the offices involved are unable to agree on a licence application, the application is also submitted to the Federal Council for a decision. In cases of minor significance or where there are precedents for the decision, the offices involved may waive the requirement for a joint decision and authorize the SECO to take a decision without consultation (art. 14 para 5 WMO).

Controls at the border are in the responsibility of the Federal Office for Customs and Border Security within the Federal Department of Finance (art. 19 para 2 WMO). The Central Office for Combating the Illegal Trade in War Material within the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport participates in enforcement and in the prevention of offences and shall report violations of the provisions of the WMA to the competent prosecution authorities. The Office of the Attorney General is responsible for legal prosecutions.

5. Lists of conventional weaponry under national export controls and the basis for their control

Article 5 WMA defines war materiel.

¹ *The following are deemed to be war materiel:*

- a. *Weapons, weapons systems, munitions and military explosives;*
- b. *Equipment that has been specifically conceived or modified for use in combat or for the conduct of combat and which is not as a general rule used for civilian purposes.*

² *War materiel also includes individual components and assembly packages, which may also be partially processed, provided it is discernible that such components cannot be used in the same form for civilian purposes.*

The Federal Council has listed the goods considered as war materiel in annex 1 to the WMO. Categorization of war materiel is based on the Munitions List (ML) of the Wassenaar Arrangement.

6. Principles and national regulations on the destination or end-user of the equipment

An export licence will usually only be granted if a declaration is provided stating that the material will not be re-exported (non-re-export declaration as part of the End-User Certificate (EUC)).

Switzerland does not publish a list of destinations of concern.

The individual sanctions ordinances adopted by the Federal Council stipulate the specific measures and prohibitions in place against certain countries, certain individuals, groups or entities. All sanctions ordinances and changes to them are published in the Official Corpus of Federal Law which is available online and in hardcopy.

Annex 2 to the WMO lists 25 countries that (like Switzerland) are committed to stringent export controls, that take part in international export control regimes (namely: Australia Group, Missile Technology Control Regime, Nuclear Suppliers Group, Wassenaar Arrangement) and that are compliant with all export requirements listed in art. 22a WMA.

No specific licence is required for the brokering of or the trade in war material involving these countries; however, dealers and professional brokers require an initial licence. Furthermore, no specific licence is required in order to enter into contracts relating to the transfer of intellectual property, including know-how, related to war material, or the granting of rights thereto provided such property or rights are intended for states that are listed in annex 2. Moreover, holders of initial licences as well as transport and haulage undertakings with a domicile or permanent establishment in Switzerland may apply for a general transit licence (GTL) for the transit of war material to countries of final destination that are listed in annex 2.

7. Requirements for the provision of an end-user certificate in an export licence application, or of non-re-exportation clauses, or of any other type of certification before and after delivery for conventional arms export contracts

Before the granting of an authorization, the respective non-re-export declaration as part of the End-User Certificate (EUC) will be assessed in a formal manner. If there is evidence that the non-re-export declaration has been violated, the licensing authority may take precautionary measures (e.g. temporary stop of delivery, request for information, on-site inspections). Licences can be reassessed and may be suspended or revoked (art. 19 WMA). The verification of information in EUCs is not regulated by law but subject to an internal directive on this matter. Switzerland requests confirmations stating that the material arrived at the intended destination on a case-by-case basis or makes use of its right to conduct Post-Shipment Verification (PSV) (see above).

8. National definition of transit and transshipment (including free zones) of conventional arms, together with associated national legislation and compliance procedures

The transit of war material is regulated under the legislation on war material in a similar manner to export. WMA stipulates that transit is subject to authorization in the same way as exports are and also under the same conditions. The authorization criteria are identical to those, which apply to decisions on exports. Exceptions to the normal procedures include persons travelling by air carrying firearms for their personal use (provided such goods do not leave the transit area of the airport) and security agents accompanying official visits. In these cases, no transit licence is required.

9. Procedures governing companies wishing to export arms

Anyone who wishes to manufacture war material on Swiss territory or wishes to trade or broker war material on a professional basis requires an initial licence. The initial licence is granted to natural or legal persons if the applicant offers the required guarantee for the proper conduct of the business affairs and if the intended activity is not contrary to national interest.

No initial licence is required by those who outside of Switzerland manufacture, trade in, or act as a professional broker for firearms under the legislation on weapons, their components or accessories or their munitions or munitions components and who therefore hold a licence to trade arms under the legislation on weapons.

The initial licence is non-assignable and applies only to the war material mentioned therein. It may be of limited duration and subject to conditions and requirements. It may be revoked completely or in part if the requirements for its grant are no longer fulfilled.

For the export of war material, a specific licence is required.

Companies are – with one exception (a licence is required in order to enter into a contract for the transfer of intellectual property including know-how that is essential for the manufacture or the use of war material from Switzerland to a natural person or legal entity with domicile or registered office abroad. The same applies to entering into a contract that grants rights to such intellectual property and know-how) – not obliged to obtain official authorization already before contract negotiations begin or before a contract is signed. However, in these cases the companies act on their own risk. They have the possibility to ask the licensing authority in advance if a possible export – under the present circumstances – could be approved (likelihood of approval).

10. Policy on the revocation of export licences once they have been approved

In accordance with WMA, if exceptional circumstances require, a licence may be suspended or revoked.

Additionally, as stipulated in art. 4 WMO an initial licence to manufacture war material shall be withdrawn if it has not been used for five years. Initial licence for the trade or brokerage of war material shall be withdrawn if it has not been used for three years.

If an initial licence is withdrawn, revoked or has lapsed for any other reason, the war material that is still in the possession of the licence holder shall be sold or recycled under the supervision of the licensing authority.

11. Penal and administrative implications for any exporter failing to comply with national controls

Violations of the WMA will be prosecuted according to article 33 WMA. Criminal sanctions provided are custodial sentences or monetary penalties. In serious cases, the penalty is a custodial sentence of at least one year but not exceeding ten years, which may be combined with a monetary penalty.

12. Any circumstances in which the export of arms does not require an export licence

In accordance with WMA, the authorization requirements for the export of war material consist of an initial licence for general access to this activity and a specific licence for each individual case.

13. Licences for temporary export (e.g., demonstrations or testing), the period allowed and any special conditions attached to the licence, including verification of return procedures

For war materiel that is temporarily exported under the customs procedure for temporary admission using a written customs declaration for use in an exhibition or a performance or for valuation, the export licence is also valid for its re-import. The exporter is obliged to re-import the exported items. These re-imports have to be confirmed with respective customs declarations.

14. Licence documents and any standard conditions attached to it

Documents related to the licensing procedure have been provided with the update 1998. With effect from 1 October 2014 an electronic licensing system (ELIC) was introduced which replaced the pre-existing paper-based licensing processes. All licence documents are now only handled electronically (<http://www.elic.admin.ch>).

15. Different types (e.g. individual, general, restricted, full, permanent, etc.) of licences and what they are used for

The export of war material under WMA requires, in addition to an initial licence, a specific export licence.

With respect to the activities that require a licence in terms of the WMA, a distinction is made between the following specific licences: brokerage licence; import licence; export licence; transit licence; licence to enter into agreements relating to the transfer of intellectual property, including know-how or the granting of rights thereto; trading licence.

16. Advice given to exporters as to licensability, such as the likelihood of approval for a possible transaction.

⇒ See also paragraph 9 in this document.

A potential exporter may inquire advice from the licensing authority. A preliminary inquiry will be answered in writing. Although the answer of the licensing authority is not legally binding with regard to a future decision on a possible official application, the answer remains normally the same.

17. The average number of export licences issued annually and the staff engaged in the export licensing procedure

Between 2'000 and 3'000 export licences are issued per year (2024: 1914). 10 full-time employees are employed in the export licensing procedure.

18. Other relevant information pertaining to the export of conventional arms and related technology, e.g., additional laws, reports to Parliament, special procedures for certain goods

The Federal Council reports annually to the Control Committees of the Federal Parliament on the details relating to the export of war material.

19. Are all guidelines governing conventional arms transfers nationally published?

The pertinent laws are issued in three official languages (German, French and Italian) – some texts additionally in English – and are available online at <https://www.admin.ch/gov/fr/accueil/droit-federal/recueil-systematique.html>. The public is kept informed on amendments to the laws, ordinances and regulations at various points in time, for example, when the Federal Council adopts the text of a law, ordinance or regulation, after Parliament has considered amendments, and by the time amendments enter into force.
