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OSCE

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The United Kingdom Delegation to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna presents its compliments to the OSCE Secretariat, all other Delegations to the Forum for Security Co-operation, and to the Conflict Prevention Centre, and

has the honour to submit its **Questionnaire on the Export of Conventional Arms and Related Technology**.

The United Kingdom Delegation avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the OSCE Secretariat, other Delegations to the FSC and to the Conflict Prevention Centre the assurance of its highest consideration.

UNITED KINGDOM DELEGATION
VIENNA

19th August 2025

To: All Delegations/Permanent Missions to the OSCE

To: Conflict Prevention Centre



**Questionnaire on Participating States' Policy and/or National Practices
and Procedures for the Export of Conventional Arms and Related Technology**

OSCE participating States are requested to provide details of:

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

UK Government policy is to authorise exports wherever they are compatible with our political, strategic and security interests and in accordance with national and international law and other national and international commitments that the UK has made regarding the export of these goods. The UK obligations and commitments are set out in the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria¹ and are consistent with EU Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP, as amended by Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/1560.

2. Their national legislation governing the export of conventional arms and related technology. If applicable, report changes and/or updates to the data provided in 1995, including any relevant subsidiary legislation.

The Export Control Act 2002 came into force on 1 May 2004, replacing some and extending other previous export control powers and introducing a more transparent framework and increasing Parliamentary accountability. Under the Act, a licence is required for arms trafficking and brokering activities which take place wholly or partly in the UK and intangible technology transfers. The provision of technical assistance related to weapons of mass destruction is also controlled. The Export Control Order 2008 replaced the original secondary legislation introduced at the time of the Act and is now the main legislation outlining the duties and responsibilities of companies for the export of controlled goods.

3. Any international agreements or guidelines, other than OSCE commitments, covering the export of conventional arms to which they are a party.

Please also refer to the answer to Q1.

The UK is also a party to the guidelines for conventional arms transfers agreed by the permanent five members of the UN Security Council in October 1991 and was a founder member of the Wassenaar Arrangement that came into force on 1 November 1996. The UK has also signed and ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, prohibiting inter alia the production and transfer of anti-personnel mines; and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which inter alia prohibits the production and transfer of cluster munitions.

The UK has also banned the transfer of MANPADS to non-state end-users and will only export them to foreign governments or to agents authorised by a government, in

¹ <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-12-08/hcws449>

accordance with the agreement reached in the Wassenaar Arrangement on the 'Elements for Export Controls on MANPADS' and OSCE (FSC.DEC.03/04).

The UK has also signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which entered into force on 24 December 2014, and is fully committed to its obligations under the Treaty. The ATT seeks to establish the highest possible common international standards for regulating or improving the regulation of international trade in conventional arms, and to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms and prevent their diversion. The UK is also committed to upholding the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

4. The procedures for processing an application to export conventional arms and related technology:

- **who is the issuing authority?**
- **what other authorities are involved in and what is their function?**
- **who deals with compliance?**

Licences to export arms and other goods subject to control for strategic reasons are granted by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade (DBT), acting through the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU).

The ECJU was set up by the Government in July 2016 to bring together staff from the DBT, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD). The creation of ECJU has centralised expertise and removed duplication, helping us to provide a high-quality service to business. The ECJU also has a responsibility for ensuring that exporters are in compliance with the conditions of General and Global licences, including maintaining proper records.

All relevant licence applications are circulated to relevant advisers in other Government Departments. These include wider FCDO and MOD staff.

FCDO has a responsibility for considering the foreign policy implications of any proposed export or supply of controlled goods and technology. This includes ensuring that recommendations on export licences given to DBT are consistent with overall FCDO policy for defence exports and consistent with the UK's international obligations and commitments (including in relation to arms embargoes). FCDO also has an interest in human rights issues and internal repression records of recipient countries and provides advice on certain applications and considers the economic and development impact of the proposed export on the recipient country.

MOD has responsibility for considering the potential risk to the national security of the UK and territories whose external relations are the UK's responsibility, as well as that of friendly and allied countries. The MOD also considers the risk of diversion of goods and technology to an undesirable end-user or for undesirable end-use; provides military, technical and equipment security advice; and provides advice on bilateral defence relations generally. The MOD is also the lead Department for the Form 680 process which allows industry to seek Government approval for the release of classified information or supply of classified defence equipment overseas.

HM Revenue and Customs working with the Border Force are responsible for the enforcement of export controls and the investigation of suspected offences.

5. **Lists of conventional weaponry under national export controls and the basis for their control. If applicable, report changes and/or updates to the data provided in 1995.**

Please also refer to the answer to Q2.

The UK 'Military List' is contained in Schedule 2 of the Export Control Order 2008 and is drawn from the Wassenaar Arrangement Munitions List. Schedule 3 of the Export Control Order 2008 list other goods for which the UK controls for reasons of national policy.

6. **Principles and national regulations on the destination or end-user of the equipment. Is there a complete *erga omnes* system or a published list of**

- **destinations of concern?**
- **embargoed countries?**
- **differentiation between destinations (e.g., is there any preferential treatment of (groups of) countries)?**

Please also refer to the answer to Q19.

All licence applications to export conventional arms are considered on a case-by-case basis against Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, irrespective of their destination. Criterion One specifies that a licence should be refused if approval is inconsistent with the United Nations and Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) sanctions, as well as national sanctions observed by the UK and other relevant commitments regarding the application of strategic export controls.

7. **Requirements for the provision of an end-user certificate in an export license application, or of non-re-exportation clauses, or of any other type of certification before and after delivery for conventional arms export contracts. If applicable, please specify any verification of the end-user certificate and/or non-re-exportation clauses before and after delivery.**

Individual export licence applications for permanent exports must be supported by an end-user undertaking before a licence can be granted or, in cases where the consignee is a government body, a copy of the relevant part of the official purchase order. All end-user undertakings include a declaration by the end-user that they will not re-export or transfer the goods to a destination subject to an embargo imposed by the UN, OSCE or other observable embargo where to do so would be a breach of that embargo.

In addition, the UK regularly conducts checks at the licensing stage in cases where it wishes to confirm that the end-user documentation is accurate. For Open Individual Export Licences (OIELs) in particular, end-user undertakings (or a copy of the official

purchase order) must be obtained within 30 days of each export. These do not need to be presented to DBT but must be made available for inspection if required.

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

The terms “transit” and “transshipment” have specific meanings for customs purposes. However, for export control purposes they are taken to mean simply “goods passing through the UK from one overseas destination en route to another overseas destination”.

A licence is not required for most transits or transshipments through the UK provided certain conditions are met. If any of the conditions cannot be met, then an export licence is required.

The conditions are that the goods remain on board a ship or aircraft for the period that they remain in the UK or are goods on a through bill of lading or through air waybill, and in either case are exported within 30 days of their importation. The goods in question must have been originally exported in accordance with the laws of the originating country, and the destination of the goods must be the same as that declared prior to their original export.

The exceptions to the above – i.e. where an export licence is always required for transit and transshipment - apply to:

- Anti-personnel mines and components designed especially for them; a range of torture equipment; cluster munitions; and related equipment, software and technology to all destinations.
- Certain Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition; MANPADS and Long-Range Missiles; and certain other conventional weapons and their components (as specified in Part B of Schedule 1 to the Export Control Order 2008) to a further list of sensitive destinations.
- Any military goods to an embargoed destination.

9. **The procedures governing companies wishing to export arms. Are companies obliged to seek official governmental authority to enter contract negotiations or to sign contracts with foreign customers?**

Companies are not generally required to seek UK Government authority to enter contract negotiations or to sign contracts with foreign customers. However, companies must seek authority from the MOD if they wish to release UK classified information. Provisions are in place relating to the controls on the trafficking and brokering of such goods.

10. **Policy on the revocation of export licences once they have been approved; please list any published regulations.**

The Export Control Order 2008 permits the Secretary of State for Business and Trade to amend, suspend or revoke licences that the SoS has granted. The imposition of trade sanctions or an arms embargo are two clear examples where a revocation might occur; a significant deterioration in the internal security situation of the recipient country or a serious increase in regional tensions are others. There are no specific restrictions on the reasons for which licences may be revoked. However, the general principles of UK administrative law control the circumstances and way they can be revoked. Exporters have the right to appeal for licences that are revoked.

11. **The penal and administrative implications for any exporter failing to comply with national controls. If applicable, report changes and/or updates to the data provided in 1995.**

There are a range of penalties in place for exporters failing to comply with export controls. These are set out in the Export Control Order 2008 and Custom and Excise Management Act 1979. HM Revenue and Customs are the UK enforcement authority and have wide-ranging powers at their disposal. The maximum penalty for illegal export of conventional arms is 10 years imprisonment.

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

Export controls on arms and other military goods do not apply to the Crown, where the Crown retains ownership of the items. In addition, various visiting forces and international organisations are exempt from import and export restrictions.

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.**

Licences for temporary exports are normally valid for 12 months. A condition for such licences is that a) an export licence authorizing the return of the goods to the UK must be obtained before the goods are exported from the UK, and b) the goods must be returned to the UK within 12 months of the date of the licence. Holders of temporary licences must confirm in writing to the ECJU that the goods have been returned.

14. **Licence documents and any standard conditions attached to it (copies to be provided).**

Copies of the current export licence application forms, with details of standard conditions, have been provided with previous returns and remain unchanged.

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

The following licences are available for strategic controlled goods:

Standard Individual Export Licence (SIEL)

A SIEL is granted to an individual exporter and allows the export of a specified quantity of specified goods to a specified consignee or end-user as set out in the licence. The

licence is usually valid for up to 2 years or until the specified quantity of goods has been shipped, whichever is sooner.

Open Individual Export Licence (OIEL)

This licence is granted to an individual exporter and allows multiple shipments of specified goods to specified destinations. The licence is generally valid for up to 5 years. OIELs are usually only granted for lower-risk transactions where the exporter can demonstrate good compliance with export controls and a genuine business need for this type of licence. Holders of OIELs are subject to periodic compliance inspections by the ECJU.

Open General Export Licence (OGEL)

An OGEL allows the export of specific goods by any exporter to a range of destinations, as set out in the licence itself. The combination of goods and destinations permitted on each OGEL have been carefully assessed against the Consolidated Criteria.

Exporters must register for these licences and adhere to all terms and conditions. All registered users of OGELs are subject to periodic compliance inspections by the ECJU

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

Please also refer to the answer to Q4.

The ECJU provides two web-based search tools which help to identify which products need a licence (the 'goods checker') and, if licensable, whether an Open General Export Licence² (OGEL) potentially covers the proposed exports (the 'OGEL checker').

The goods checker tool provides an internet-based search function across the Consolidated UK Strategic Export Control List.

The OGEL checker assists users who know the rating (Control List classification) of their goods and the destination for the proposed export to find out which OGEL(s) may cover the export, provided all the conditions can be met.

The Government does not provide advice on the likelihood of approval for a possible transaction, other than in limited circumstances through the Form 680 process operated by the MOD.

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

Based on the last five years to and including 2024, around 12,500 Standard Individual Export Licences and 320 Open Individual Export Licences are issued annually.

The ECJU comprises 155 staff, of which 126 are DBT staff, 19 FCDO and 10 MOD staff. Other Government Departments (including wider MOD and FCDO staff) are also involved in the export licensing process but there is no centrally held estimate for the total number of people involved.

² A full explanation of the different UK export licences currently available is included in Section 1 of this report

18. **Any 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.**

Information is available in the UK Government's 2022 Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls and published quarterly statistics reports.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data>

DBT also manages an online searchable database that allows users to produce their own reports from export and trade licensing statistics. The database is available at:

<https://www.exportcontroldb.trade.gov.uk/sdb2/fox/sdb/>

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

Such information can be found using the GOV.UK website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/beginners-guide-to-export-controls>

NB: Participating States that do not export conventional arms and related technology will inform all other participating States.