



The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Mark Garnier MP
Chair of the Committees on Arms Export Controls

Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair of the Defence Committee

Alicia Kearns MP
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee

Angus Brendan MacNeil MP
Chair of the International Trade Committee

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the International Development Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA

Our Ref: PM/NMP2913
1st February 2023

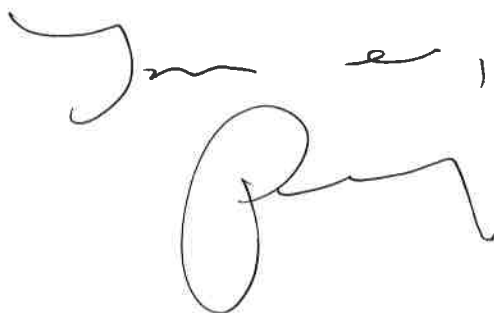
Dear Chairs,

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the establishment of a Select Committee on Arms Export Controls.

I appreciate the importance of effective Parliamentary scrutiny of arms exports, however, I am currently not convinced that the change you have requested is needed. The Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC) has an important scrutinising role and the current arrangement means that the expertise garnered by the constituent Committee members can be applied to the question of arms exports, and while you note the possibility for guesting arrangements, I do believe that there remains strong merit in the four committees working together on these issues on an equal basis.

You primarily cite issues with quorum for meetings and agreeing reports as the need for change, and I would be happy to discuss with you further whether there are any additions that could be made to the Standing Orders to address the quorum requirements for when the four relevant committees meet together specifically in this context. Any such changes to the Standing Orders would of course also need to command consensus across the House.

I am copying this letter to the Shadow Leader of the House and the SNP Leader of the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. M. P.' with a large, stylized 'P'.



Committees on Arms Export Controls

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Leader of the House
House of Commons

By email

Wednesday, 11 January 2023

Dear Leader of the House,

Establishment of Select Committee on Arms Export Controls

As the Chairs of the four constituent committees of the Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC), and the current Chair of CAEC, we are writing to seek the Government's support for the establishment of a dedicated select committee on arms export controls.

The current rules governing the structure of how CAEC operates, in particular the quorum requirements¹, are not conducive to effective scrutiny when four extremely busy committees are involved. As such, in recent years it has proved increasingly difficult for CAEC to function effectively, reducing the level of parliamentary scrutiny over the important Government activity of the licencing and control of arms exports. This is not in the interests of Parliament, the public, or Government.

It is our view that the best way of ensuring that arms export policy and implementation receives the level of scrutiny it deserves is for a dedicated select committee to be established with a clearly defined remit and dedicated membership. It would still be possible for collaboration with other select committees to continue where appropriate using the guesting provisions now available to committees. Clearly, this solution will require the support of the Government, not to mention other parties in the House and will require a decision on the allocation of the Chairship to a particular party and for arrangements to be made for a Chair election in the usual way following this. If you are supportive in principle, we would be happy to work with you on the role and remit of the new Committee.

We hope that you can agree to this proposal for enhancing effective scrutiny of this important and discrete policy area by taking forward the establishment of a dedicated select committee.

¹ For CAEC to meet formally and take oral evidence, a quorum of eight is required, compared to the standard quorum of three for select committees. For report agreements, a quorum of twelve is required for CAEC. This is higher than even the Liaison Committee's quorum.



Committees on Arms Export Controls

I am copying this letter to the Shadow Leader of the House and Shadow SNP Leader of the House.

In view of our desire to make progress on this matter it would be helpful to have a reply by 23 January.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Champion MP

**Chair of the International Development
Committee**

Angus Brendan MacNeil MP

Chair of the International Trade Committee

Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP

Chair of the Defence Committee

Alicia Kearns MP

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee

Mark Garnier MP
**Chair of the Committees on Arms
Export Controls**