



Department for International Trade

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Mark Garnier MP
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Dear Chair,

I promised to write to you following up on points raised in your Oral Evidence session on 10 November 2020.

In this letter, I provide further information on the following areas:

- An assessment of reports that British-made sniper rifles are in the hands of the Russian forces.
- Whether steps can or should be taken to share information on denied trade control licences with the country of origin.
- Information about when the department last revoked or suspended an export licence.

Sniper Rifles

The records show that we have not granted any licences for sniper rifles to the military or internal security forces in Russia since 2000.

The sanctions on Russia cover all types of military equipment, as well as dual-use items that are or may be intended for a military end-use or a military end-user. These measures did not apply to contracts that were in place before the sanctions were imposed.

Since the arms embargo came into force, we have only issued licences for military items within the terms of the sanctions. This includes licences for small arms ammunition and sporting guns which were in relation to contracts concluded before 1 August 2014.

The available records show that some sniper rifles were licensed for export to Russia before the arms embargo was imposed. These were all exported to individuals or to dealers for commercial sale for sporting purposes.

The Department cannot speculate on how the weapons described by Mr Elwood as “arctic warfare” weapons were able to get into the hands of the Russian forces. It would be a matter for HMRC to investigate if it believed that a breach of our export controls had occurred.

Sharing refusal information on Trade Control Licences

Export licence applications contain information that is commercially sensitive, which may be the subject of legally binding confidentiality agreements between the exporter and the customer or other third parties, disclosure may cause other harm to the exporter.

It is essential for the proper operation of the licensing system that exporters have confidence that sensitive information that they provide to us will be protected. This means that any sharing of meaningful information about refusal decisions would need to be subject to satisfactory data sharing agreements and could not be done spontaneously.

Where similar circumstances to those described by Mr Russell-Moyle arise in future, HM Government will consider what relevant information may be shared with other countries, and how this might be done.

Revocations and suspensions of export licences.

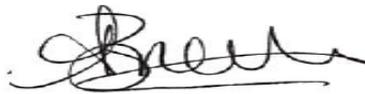
HM Government is able to review licences – and suspend or revoke as necessary – when circumstances require, and this is done in line with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

The published official statistics covering the period 1 January – 31 March 2020 show that ten Standard Individual Export Licences and one Open Individual Export Licence were revoked during that quarter.

An export licence was last suspended in September 2019. The licence in question was one of those issued in error, the circumstances of which were set out the report by Jonathan Mills. The licence in question was suspended the day before it was revoked. Prior to that we suspended a licence for export to China during August 2019. The licence was revoked eight days later.

I trust that you and your fellow Members find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Brooks', with a horizontal line underneath.

Amanda Brooks CBE

Director General (interim) Trade Relations and Implementation