

Government Response to Lords International Agreements Committee 13th Report - Agreement on Defence Export Controls

The Ministry of Defence welcomes the Committee's 13th report of session 2024-26 on the agreement on Defence Export Controls (CP 1366)) and is grateful for the committee's feedback and constructive scrutiny. We agree with the committee that the UK's accession to the Agreement represents a valuable step in supporting the UK's defence industry, strengthening cooperation with European partners, and maintaining robust standards under the UK's strategic export-control framework.

The Agreement on Defence export controls (CP 1396) establishes a framework between the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Spain to facilitate the licensing of defence exports within collaborative industrial programs. The Agreement reflects a recognition, in the [Strategic Defence Review \(SDR\)](#), that support for secure, interoperable and agile defence supply chains is central to sustaining the UK's industrial capability and resilience, including through international partnerships. By joining the Agreement, the UK reinforces its commitment to responsible defence trade and closer cooperation with European allies on shared security priorities.

This report provides the Department's formal response to the House of Lords International Agreements Committee.

A structured approach supporting joint exports, Growth and Security

We welcome the Committee's conclusion that UK accession to the agreement represents a positive step for enhancing UK-industry competitiveness and reducing export licensing burdens. As the committee notes, the Agreement provides a structured approach to cooperation between signatories concerning the granting approvals for defence exports and jointly produced defence equipment where there is a cross-border dimension. In doing so it seeks to enable the avoidance of some problems which have arisen in projects involving multinational supply chains. The Agreement also creates an expectation that signatories consider joint exports favourably and aims to reduce the likelihood of signatories objecting to the export of Joint Government Projects and Industrial Joint Ventures, subject to compliance with existing national and international legal obligations. This will mean more certainty for UK firms involved in multinational defence programs and supply chains, while preserving UK sovereignty. As set out in the recently published Strategic Defence Review and Defence Industrial Strategy, which includes an aspiration to see the UK becoming Europe's leading defence exporter, the approach aligns with government work to enable UK defence-industrial resilience supporting UK defence industry as an engine for skilled UK jobs and growth.

Maintaining rigorous UK Export control standards

As the committee highlights, the Agreement does not affect the UK's export control regime or its obligations under international law, including the Arms Trade Treaty, on the conditions for exporting of military equipment. The UK's licensing authority will therefore continue to assess each licence application against the [Strategic Export Licensing Criteria](#). Accession to the Agreement will not change this approach.

UK Security and Partnerships

The UK is committed to reinforcing its leading role in NATO and Euro-Atlantic security in an increasingly volatile world. Strengthening our defence and industrial partnerships with European allies is central to the endeavour.

UK accession to the Agreement will facilitate our defence trade and will bolster our defence-industrial collaboration with NATO and European allies. By strengthening defence-industrial collaboration between the UK and several of our closest European partners, accession will make a positive contribution to UK national security and NATO.

Summary

We are grateful for the committee's 13th report of session 2024-26 on the agreement on Defence Export Controls (CP 1366)). We agree with the committee that this is a valuable measure supporting the vital role played by UK industry in UK growth, defence, and wider European security. As the committee concludes, the UK's robust export controls on defence equipment exports are maintained under the agreement.