



The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP, Chair
Business and Trade Sub-Committee on Economic Security, Arms and Export Controls,
House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

24 March 2026

Dear Liam Byrne MP,

I write to you regarding an investigation by Declassified [published last week](#), which revealed that an Elbit owned subsidiary, UAV Tactical Systems (U-TacS) based in Leicester, has sent dozens of drone components, including Watchkeeper engines, to Israel over the past 18 months. Advanced radar systems used by the Watchkeeper have also been exported to Israel by Thales.

As you are aware, in September 2024 the Government implemented a partial suspension of arms licences to Israel, including for components for drones, due to the clear risk of serious violations of international humanitarian law by Israel in Gaza. The Government also found that Israel was not committed to complying with international humanitarian law.

Following an unprecedented spike in the value of arms licences to Israel immediately after the partial suspension, the Government repeatedly made assurances that these new licences were for military equipment for re-export out of Israel or in support of such export contracts.

Export licensing figures [published by CAAT](#) show that the UK approved licenses for £127.6 million worth of military equipment to Israel in single issue licenses between October to December 2024. This is a massive increase, with the figure in this three-month period totalling more than 2020-2023 combined.

The majority of these licenses were for military radars, components and software as well as targeting equipment. The licenses were granted after the government's announcement of a temporary arms suspension on 2nd September 2024.

CAAT's investigations revealed that the largest of these licences, two radar licences to Thales totalling to £120.1m, were likely for Watchkeeper X drone, being sold by Elbit to Romania. The Watchkeeper WK450, is modelled on the Hermes 450 drone which has been "battle-tested" by Israel on Palestinians. One of these licences was for incorporation and one was not.

It has come to our attention that, according to the Department of Business and Trade, only the incorporation licence remains extant. Apparently, the other, standard licence was in place in case the goods needed to be returned from Israel to the UK for repairs.

The exporter surrendered this licence as no longer being necessary at some point in late 2025. A [parliamentary question by John Milne MP](#) on 3rd March 2026 confirmed that the incorporation licence, for re-export, is still extant.

As published in Declassified's investigation, in addition to the Thales radars, shipping documents show how dozens of drone components have been sent from U-TacS to Elbit sites in Israel since the contract with Romania was signed.

The goods descriptions for those shipments include:

- Aircraft parts UAV
- 7 x unmanned air vehicle harnesses
- UAV Flight Trials Kit
- UAV Assembly
- UAV System Parts – Pre Production
- Military Aircraft Parts
- UAV Starter Ext Harness.

Some of the shipments from U-TacS to Israel specifically mention the Watchkeeper programme. In 2025, U-TacS exported a “WK engine” and an “Engine WK 62.5 Hours Kit” to Elbit's Advanced Technology Centre in Haifa.

However, despite repeated Government assurances that the equipment was for re-export, the contract with Romania has not been delivered, and these parts for drones appear to have remained in Israel. Elbit [filed](#) a declaration of “force majeure” with Romania, saying the situation in Gaza had affected its “ability to fulfil its contractual obligations”.

Members of Parliament have repeatedly questioned the Government in relation to this issue, including your own Committee. In July 2025 Steven Witherden MP [led a letter to the then Foreign Secretary and Business and Trade Secretary](#) co-signed by 56 MPs and Lords, asking for an explanation of these licences.

In September 2025 Government Ministers were questioned over the “re-export” licences by the Business and Trade Sub-Committee during an evidence session on [arms export licences to Israel](#). Questions included:

“Q21 **Charlie Maynard:** So there is no burden of proof on Israel to demonstrate that it has done what it said it would do and export it?”

“Q23 **Charlie Maynard:** Why would you not ask for export proof from Israel, so that if it says that it will export these things, it can demonstrate that?”

Chris Bryant: Because our relationship is with the exporter. If there were to be any evidence at any point that that is not where it was ending up, that would be a breach of the licence, and we would be able to revoke.”

Campaign Against Arms Trade is calling for an investigation into the continuous export of drone components from the UK to Israel since the 2024 partial arms

suspension, and for the Government to implement end-use monitoring on UK made equipment for apparent 're-export' out of Israel.

Given the scrutiny that has already been given by Parliamentarians and by your Committee, the Department of Business and Trade must now finally provide full transparency, and explain where exactly these drone components are now, and what have they been used for to date. We would be grateful for any representations you and the Committee may be able to make to the Department to obtain answers to these questions.

Yours Sincerely,

Katie Fallon

Advocacy Manager, Campaign Against Arms Trade