

UK arms exports in 2024 Executive Summary

March 2026

This report summarises key quantitative and qualitative trends in UK arms exports in 2024, and in the 5–10 year periods up to 2024, using a variety of sources of information, official and otherwise. It also discusses some of the key issues and concerns relating to the UK arms trade in 2024, namely arms sales to Israel in the context of the genocidal war on Gaza; the government’s push to sell Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey; and the sale of arms to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the context of the UAE’s role in arming the genocidal Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia in Sudan. CAAT’s previous annual report on [UK arms exports in 2023](#) was published in March 2025. The report covers 2024 rather than 2025 as some official data for 2024 was not expected until December 2025; in fact, this data, on the value of arms export contracts signed by UK arms companies, has still not been published and may never be.

The arms trade in general is seriously lacking in transparency. Data on the UK arms trade comes from numerous sources, measuring different things and each with their own issues and exclusions. This report seeks to provide an overall picture for UK arms exports by presenting and discussing data from all reliable sources. It is the only place where all such information on UK arms exports is presented and discussed together.

Key issues in UK arms exports

Arms sales to Israel

- The UK government announced a partial suspension of arms export licences to Israel, covering equipment for use in Gaza, in September 2024.
- However, they exempted components for the F-35 combat aircraft, provided these are supplied via the United States or other third countries, rather than directly to Israel.
- The F-35 has been used heavily by Israel during the genocide in Gaza, and UK components for the aircraft are almost certainly the most significant element of UK arms exports to Israel.
- The government issued Single Individual Export Licences (SIELs) for military goods to Israel worth £142 million, the highest figure since 2017.
- The majority of these were accounted for by two licences issued in November 2024, worth a combined £126 million, for military radars, issued to Thales. These were most likely connected to the project to sell Watchkeeper X UAVs to Romania, produced by Elbit Systems in Israel and the UK.

Potential Eurofighter sales to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey

- Both the UK government and BAE Systems were actively promoting further export sales of the Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft in 2024, jointly produced by BAE in the UK, Airbus in Germany and Spain, and Leonardo in Italy. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey were the key potential customers. The government and BAE are seeking to sustain the Eurofighter production line in the UK until production of the 6th generation Tempest is expected to start in the 2030s.
- Qatar ordered 24 Eurofighters in 2017, the last of which were expected to be delivered in 2025. The Qatari government stated its intention to buy a further 12 in December 2024, although at the time of writing no contract has been signed. Qatar is an absolute monarchy with severe human rights failings, and all major arms deals raise potential corruption concerns.
- Saudi Arabia has 72 Eurofighters, which it used extensively in its brutal war in Yemen between 2015 and 2022. While they were reported as showing interest in buying more planes in 2024, they were also said to be considering US and French alternatives. At the time of writing, UK efforts to sell more Typhoons do not appear to have made any clear headway.
- Turkey's path to procuring Eurofighter Typhoons was cleared in November 2024 when Germany withdrew a previous block on such a sale due to the Erdoğan regime's poor human rights record and its invasion and occupation of parts of north east Syria. Technical negotiations began in late 2024. The £8b sale of 20 Typhoons and related weapons and support by the UK to Turkey was signed in October 2025.
- The Erdoğan regime has become increasingly authoritarian since a failed 2016 coup attempt, persecuting opposition politicians, journalists, and civil society. This repression is particularly focused on the Kurdish minority.
- Turkey remains in occupation of parts of north-east Syria which it has held since invasions in 2018 and 2019. Together with local militia that it has armed and trained, it has committed serious violations of human rights and IHL in the course of its military operations and occupation. It carried out renewed bombing in late 2024 following the fall of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.
- The United Arab Emirates is a mid-level UK arms customer. Since the start of Sudan's civil war in 2023, the UAE has been arming and supporting the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia, one of the parties to the war, which has been committing genocidal violence in Darfur in western Sudan.
- UAE is one of a number of countries arming the two sides, and has a long record of diverting weapons supplied from elsewhere to various armed conflicts in the Middle East and north and east Africa.
- The UK has continued to supply arms to the UAE despite the UAE's behaviour and the risk of diversion, and despite receiving evidence as early as 2024 that UK-supplied military equipment had been supplied to the RSF by the UAE.

Arms export licences

- **The value of Single Individual Export Licences (SIELs) for items on the Military List issued in 2024 was £9.2 billion, an increase of 86% compared to 2023, and the highest figure on record in nominal terms.**
- The total value of military SIELs issued over the 5-year period 2020–24 was £31.4 billion, an increase of 9.1% in real terms compared to 2019–23, and the highest 5-year figure on record in both nominal and real terms.
- These figures do not include ‘open’ export licences, which allow for unlimited deliveries, and have no financial value attached. CAAT estimates that, on average, roughly half of UK arms exports are conducted using open licences.
- The top 5 recipient countries for single licences by value in 2024 were:
 - Saudi Arabia £2,979 million (32.3% of the total)
 - Ukraine £1,083m (11.7%)
 - Qatar £810m (8.8%)
 - USA £767m (8.3%)
 - Netherlands £435m (4.7%)
- For the 5-year period 2020–24, the top 5 recipients by value were:
 - Saudi Arabia £6,353m (20.2%)
 - Qatar £4,132m (13.1%)
 - USA £3,828m (12.2%)
 - Ukraine £1,900m (6.0%)
 - France £1,355m (4.3%)
- By region, 50% of the value of SIELs was to the Middle East (of which 44% to the Gulf states), 27% to Europe, 9.7% to Asia & the Pacific, 8.8% to the USA and Canada, 4.2% to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 0.8% to Africa.
- This represents something of a shift back to Middle East exports in comparison to the past couple of years, when Europe and the USA have accounted for a higher share.
- The figures for licences to Ukraine do not include donations of military equipment by the UK MOD, which do not require an export licence.
- Transparency in UK export licensing statistics deteriorated in 2024, as more licences were issued via the new LITE online application platform, which is replacing the previous SPIRE system. The government’s online searchable database of export licence data, from which CAAT’s online data browser draws its data, only connects to SPIRE. Licences issued through LITE are only reported in bulk quarterly and annual data and cannot be individually identified. The Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) is developing a new online searchable database that will work with LITE.

Figure 1 UK single export licence value 2003–24

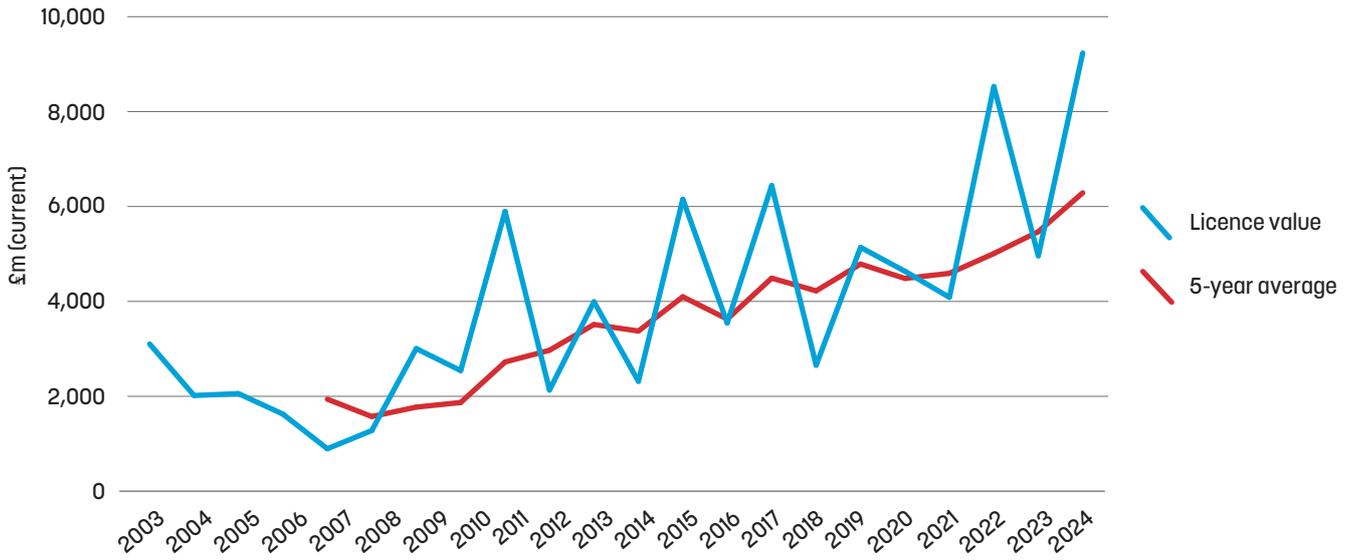
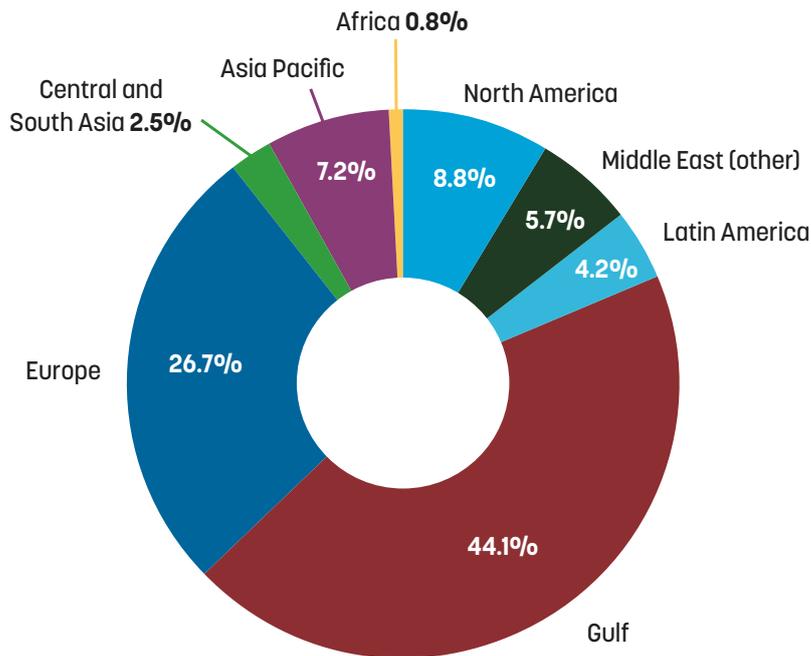


Figure 2 Export licence value by region 2024



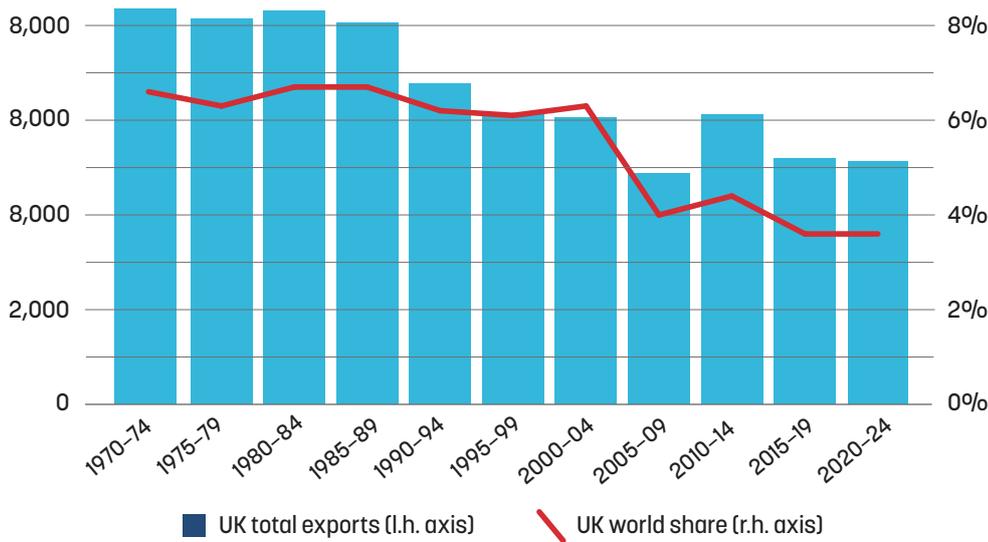
Arms export contracts statistics from UK Defence & Security Exports (UKDSE)

- UK Defence & Security Exports usually conducts an annual survey of arms companies, publishing figures for the value of arms export contracts received in the previous year, broken down by region. However, at the time of writing, figures for 2024 have still not been published. In response to a Freedom of Information request as to whether and when the data would be published, the Department for Business and Trade responded that they held no information relevant to the request, strongly implying that no data has been collected and there are no plans for publication.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data on transfers of major conventional weapons

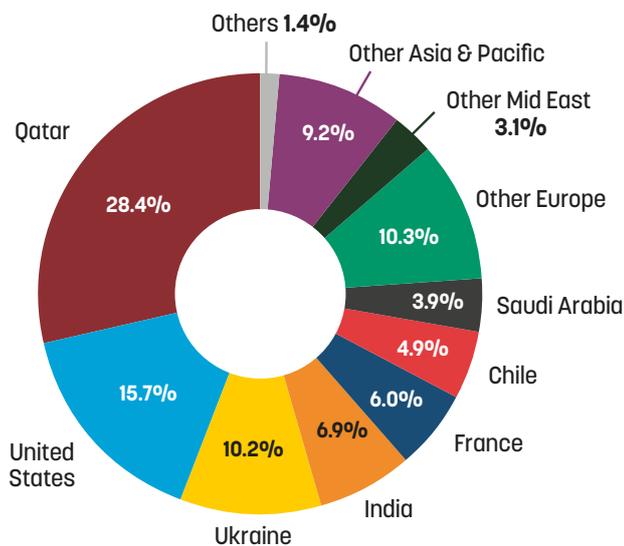
- According to the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, the UK accounted for 3.6% of global deliveries of major conventional weapons between 2020–24, a slight fall from the 2019–23 figure of 3.7%. The UK remained in 7th place among the world's major exporters.
- In absolute terms, the TIV of UK arms exports fell slightly, by 1.4%, compared to 2019–23.
- SIPRI figures are measured using their own “Trend Indicator Value” (TIV), which is not a financial measure, but seeks to capture an equivalent value of systems from different countries, regardless of the price paid.
- The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database does not cover small arms and light weapons, most components and subsystems, or military services.
- The top recipients of UK major arms deliveries in 2020–24, according to the SIPRI data, were Qatar (28.4%), the USA (15.7%), Ukraine (10.4%), India (6.9%), and France (6.0%). This is virtually unchanged compared to 2019–23.
- The Middle East remained the biggest recipient region for UK major conventional weapons, with 35.4% of the total, followed by Europe with 26.5%, 16.1% to Asia and the Pacific, 15.7% to the USA, 6.2% to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 1.4% to other countries including just 0.1% to Africa.
- Transfers of major weapons to Ukraine are included in the SIPRI data, including donations of second-hand equipment as military aid, but these are rated at a lower value than equivalent new equipment by SIPRI's TIV measure.

Figure 3 UK arms exports 1970–2024 and share of world total



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database

Figure 4 Recipients of UK major conventional weapons 2020–2024



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database

Information on UK arms transfers to Ukraine

- UK arms transfers to Ukraine include both commercial sales from UK arms companies to Ukraine, donations of UK equipment by the UK Ministry of Defence, and new equipment purchased by the UK government from the UK or overseas arms industries to supply to Ukraine.
- There are four main sources of data on UK arms supplies to Ukraine: SIPRI data on the transfers of major conventional weapons; regular briefings produced by the House of Commons Library with detailed timelines of UK military and other support to Ukraine; information on donated equipment in the government’s Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls; and UK returns to the United Nations Register of Conventional Armaments (UNROCA), which covers certain categories of major conventional weapons. The four sources are complimentary, varying in what they cover, and what time period they consider.

- According to the most recent briefing by the House of Commons Library, the total value of UK military aid pledged or delivered to Ukraine since the Russian invasion in 2022 is £13.06 billion, in addition to £5.2 billion non-military aid.
- Total military aid for 2024/25 was £2.5b, with £3.5b announced for 2025/26.

Conclusions

- While the lack of UKDSE contracts data makes firm conclusions difficult, the trend in UK arms exports in 2024 appears to be up.
- This is not yet reflected in the volume of deliveries of major conventional weapons as measured by SIPRI, but a general increase in new orders suggests that this will also increase in years to come.
- The Middle East and the UK's traditional allies in Europe and the USA remain the principle recipients of UK arms exports, with Ukraine becoming an increasingly important destination. In contrast to the previous few years, there was something of a shift back towards Middle East exports in 2024 compared to the US and Europe.
- By continuing to export components for the F-35 combat aircraft to Israel for use in the genocide in Gaza, making an ad-hoc exemption to its own licensing criteria to do so, the UK government has essentially abandoned even the pretence of exercising restraint in arms sales on the grounds of human rights and international humanitarian law. The UK arms export system is fundamentally rigged in favour of the arms industry, and the export control system is broken beyond repair.

Recommendations

- An immediate 2-way arms embargo against Israel, for so long as Israel maintains its genocide, Apartheid, and occupation of Palestine.
- A complete overhaul of the UK arms export control system to put the promotion of peace, human rights, and international humanitarian law at the centre, over and above the interests of the arms industry, with binding rules preventing arms exports to states with a serious pattern of violation of international human rights and/or humanitarian law, or that engage in war outwith the provisions of the UN Charter, with strong Parliamentary oversight.
- Specifically, ending arms sales to Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Turkey, among major current UK customers.
- Major improvements to the transparency of UK arms exports, including restoring as quickly as possible the provision of detailed export licensing data; collecting and publishing detailed data on actual deliveries of arms exports; routine provision (rather than on an ad-hoc basis in response to FOIs) of information on the companies in receipt of arms export licences; specific information on the ultimate destination of equipment licenced for incorporation and re-export; and more detailed information on the specific items covered by export licences.



Campaign Against Arms Trade,
Unit 1.9, The Green House,
244–254 Cambridge Heath Road,
London E2 9DA

 020 7281 0297

 enquiries@caat.org.uk

 caat.org.uk