CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE

UK arms exports in 2024

Data sources, trends, and key issues

March 2026

Contents

Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) is a UK-based organisation working to end the international arms trade.

Executive Summary

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; UPDATE: in fact, it was published in March 2026. See addendum.

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

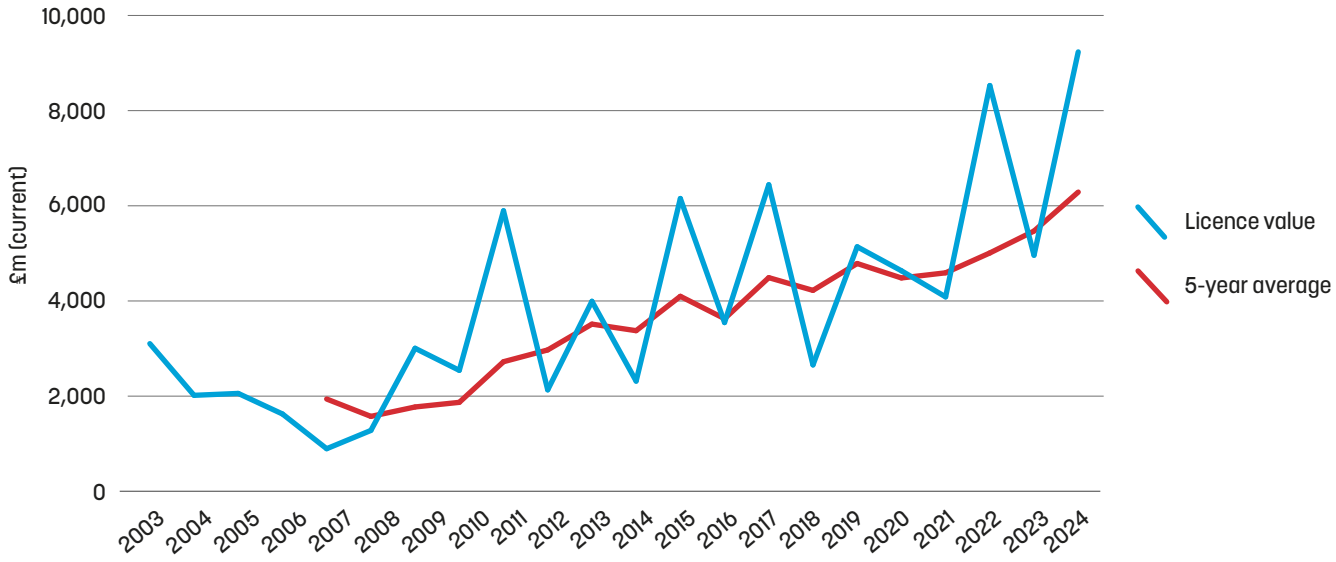
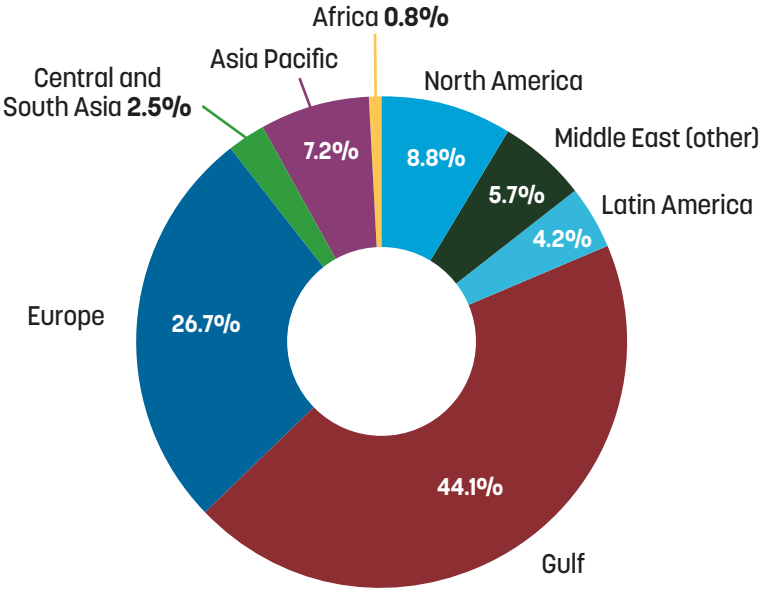


Figure 2 Export licence value by region 2024



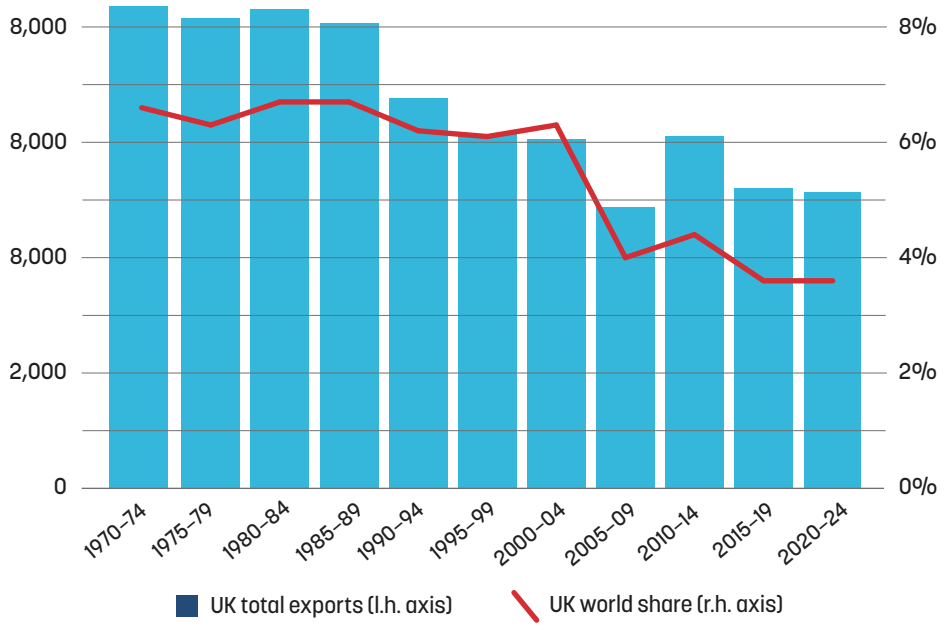
Arms export contracts statistics from UK Defence & Security Exports (UKDSE)

- 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. UPDATE: this data was published in March 2026 by the MOD, instead of UK Defence & Security Exports as before. See Addendum.

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

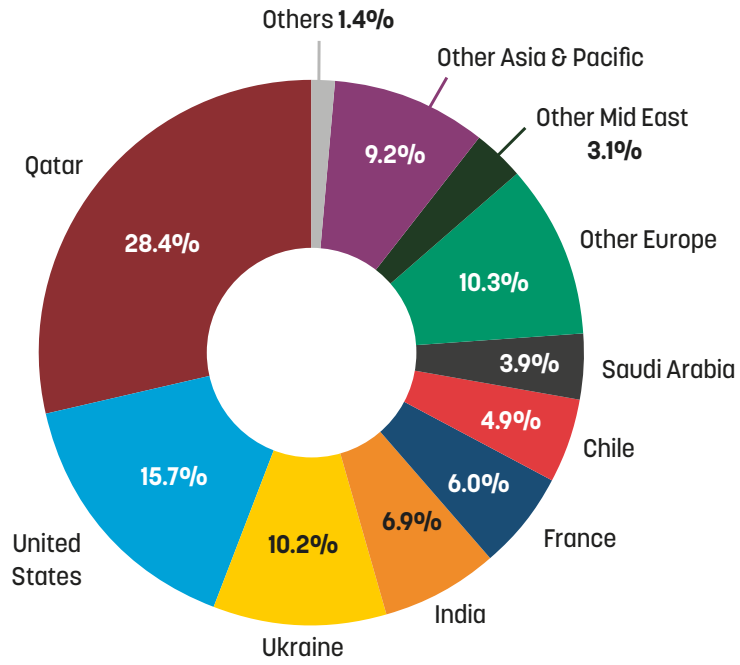
- **According to the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, the UK accounted for 3.6% of global deliveries of major conventional weapons between 2020–24, a slight fall from the 2019–23 figure of 3.7%. The UK remained in 7th place among the world's major exporters.**
- **In absolute terms, the TIV of UK arms 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. UPDATE: this data has now been published by the Ministry of Defence, confirming an increase. See Addendum.
- 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.

1 Introduction

The UK's role in supplying military equipment to aid Israel's genocide in Gaza continued to dominate the debate about the UK arms trade in 2024 - especially regarding the supply of components for the F-35 combat aircraft, of which the UK produces 15%, and which Israel has been using intensively to bomb Gaza, frequently with 2,000lb bombs. Israel had 39 F-35s during 2024, and has subsequently received 9 more. In September 2024, the new Labour government suspended 29 arms export licences to Israel, but crucially allowed the supply of components for the F-35 to continue, so long as they are supplied indirectly via the US or other F-35 partner nations, rather than directly to Israel. This, and other aspects of the UK's arms trade with Israel are discussed extensively in CAAT's September 2025 **report**,
How the UK arms and supports Israel's genocide in Gaza.
This report covers the broader qualitative and quantitative trends in UK arms exports in 2024, and in the preceding 5–10 year period, using a variety of sources of information, official and otherwise. This follows on from CAAT's previous report, **Trends in UK arms exports in 2023**, published in March 2025. The current report covers 2024, but is not published until 2026, as one key official source of data, on the value of UK arms export contracts from UK Defence & Security Exports (UKDSE), was not expected to be published until December 2025; it was eventually published in March by the Ministry of Defence. See Addendum.

Globally, the arms trade is generally an area of poor transparency. Data on the arms trade, including for the UK, comes in many different forms, measuring different things. Due to the lack of transparency, even the best sources (such as SIPRI) cannot give a complete picture. Some sources measure export licences, some contracts, some deliveries, etc. Thus, different types of data for the same country may mean different things and show different trends, making it difficult to get a complete picture. This report seeks to provide such an overall picture for UK arms exports by presenting and discussing data from all the available reliable sources, making clear what each one includes and does not include. It is the only place where all such information on UK arms exports is presented and discussed together.

Overall patterns and trends

The overall trend in UK arms exports appears to be increasing, although the lack of data on the value of UK arms export contracts from UK Defence & Security Exports makes it hard to have a complete picture. The figures for the value of Single Individual Export Licences (SIELs), discussed in section 3, increased by 86% in 2024, while the 5-year average showed a continued increase that has been steady for several years. This increasing trend is not yet reflected into a clear increasing trend in major conventional weapons exports as measured by SIPRI, but the pattern of major contracts signed in 2024 (and beyond) suggests that this may also start to increase in the coming years.

UK arms exports in 2024 continued to go predominantly to two sets of customers: those in the Middle East, especially the Gulf states, and NATO allies. However, Ukraine has become an increasingly important recipient as the war following Russia's illegal invasion in 2022 continued to rage. Ukraine became the second largest recipient of single arms export licences by value in 2024, and the third largest recipient of major conventional weapons deliveries from the UK according to SIPRI. A large proportion of UK arms exports to Ukraine are gifted by the Ministry of Defence and do not require export licences, but the increasing value of licences suggests that commercial arms exports to Ukraine are also becoming more significant.

Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia reclaimed its position as by far the largest recipient of UK arms export licences, mostly consisting of bombs and missiles, as it replenishes its arsenal following the suspension of its bombing campaign in Yemen from April 2022. Also in the Gulf, deliveries of Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft to Qatar continued, with an estimated 4 delivered according to SIPRI, from the 16 ordered in 2018. The first 8 were delivered in 2023.

Australia has not typically been a major recipient of UK arms exports, despite being a close ally, but plans progressed in 2024 for the sale of 3 AUKUS nuclear submarines, with a cooperation **agreement** signed in March between the UK and Australian governments, BAE Systems, Rolls-Royce, and the Australian state-owned shipbuilder ASC. The submarines will be built partly at BAE's submarine facility in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, and partly in Australia. Rolls-Royce will build the nuclear power plants.

The UK government and BAE Systems **pursued efforts** to secure further export orders for the Eurofighter Typhoon combat aircraft in 2024, to ensure continued production at BAE's Warton facility pending the beginning of production for the planned 6th-generation Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP) or Tempest fighter. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are target customers. Towards the end of 2024, Qatar **agreed** to buy 12 more Eurofighters in December, although as yet no contract has been signed. A potential sale of Eurofighters to Turkey, who have been seeking new options to upgrade their combat aircraft fleet since being kicked out of the F-35 programme by the US in 2019, had been held up by German objections (the plane is a collaboration between the UK, Germany, Italy, and Spain), but by the end of 2024 these had been lifted.[1] No substantive information has emerged on any potential new sale of Typhoons to Saudi Arabia.

The sources of data discussed in this report, and what they cover, are shown in box 1 below. Section 2 covers some of the most pressing issues of concern relating to UK arms exports in 2024. Section 3 discusses the data on export licensing for 2024, section 4 covers information on arms supplies to Ukraine from various sources, including SIPRI, the UK government's annual report, and research reports published by the House of Commons Library. Section 5 discusses SIPRI data on deliveries of major conventional weapons, and section 6 other sources of data. Section 7 concludes.

1 In July 2025, Turkey and the UK signed a **memorandum of understanding** for the sale of 40 Typhoons, though at the time of writing no contract has been signed.

Box 1 Types of data on UK arms exports. What types of data are there on the UK arms trade?

- Data from the government on *export licences* issued to UK companies. This is the most detailed data, with qualitative and quantitative information on what is licenced to which country. However this only gives a partial picture of the value of the UK arms trade, as only 'single' licences have a financial value attached. 'Open' licences, allowing an unlimited quantity and value of exports, do not. CAAT estimates that about half of UK arms exports are made using such open licences.
- Data from the government's arms export promotion unit, UK Defence & Security Exports (UKDSE), on the value of *contracts* for arms exports won by UK companies each year. This gives a fuller picture of the value of UK arms sales, as it doesn't depend on what type of export licence is used, but has very little detail, including no breakdown by country, only by region. UPDATE: this data was published in March by the MOD. See Addendum.
- In response to a Freedom of Information request relating to this data, whether it has been collected, and whether and when it will be published, the Department for Business and Trade responded that they did not hold any information relevant to the request. This is despite the fact that UKDSE had in fact collected the data, but had passed it to the MOD.

- Survey data by the Joint Economic Data Hub (JEDHub) on major UK arms companies' *revenue* from arms exports. This uses a more rigorous methodology, and is also more comprehensive, but doesn't include smaller companies, and also has limited detail.
- Data on exports of 'major conventional weapons' by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). This provides detailed qualitative and quantitative information on arms trade by and between all countries. However, it excludes small arms and light weapons, most exports of components and subsystems, and military services. A large proportion of the UK arms trade involves components and military services, such as the ongoing maintenance and support of UK-supplied aircraft in the buyer countries.
- Other sources, such as company annual reports, specific government reports on e.g. arms to Ukraine, and annual reports to the UN Register of Conventional Arms, may give some additional information, but are not systematic sources of data.

More discussion of these sources are presented in CAAT's annual report for 2023.

2 Key issues in UK arms exports

This section covers some of the most important and concerning issues relating to UK arms exports in 2024, namely arms exports to Israel; potential Eurofighter sales to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey; and UK arms sales to the United Arab Emirates, in light of the UAE's role in the genocide in Sudan.

2.1 Arms exports 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.

Information on UK arms exports to Israel is covered more thoroughly in our September 2025 report, ***How the UK arms and supports Israel's genocide in Gaza***. A summary of key developments in 2024 is presented here.

The most significant development in UK arms export policy in 2024 was the announcement on 1 September that the government had concluded that there was a 'clear risk' that UK military equipment supplied to Israel for use in Gaza might be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and that therefore, in accordance with criterion 2c) of the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC), it was suspending 29 export licences covering such equipment, for export either directly or indirectly (e.g. via the US) to Israel. These included licences for components for combat aircraft, military helicopters, and UAVs, and targeting equipment. Other licences, covering equipment for eventual re-export, for diplomatic, humanitarian, or research purposes, or for use by the Israeli military but not in Gaza (including components for training aircraft and submarines), were not suspended.

However, the government invoked a specific exemption to the SELC to continue to allow the indirect supply of components for Israel's F-35 combat aircraft, of which 15% is produced in the UK, despite acknowledging that these aircraft were used in Gaza, and that the risk of use to violate IHL applied to UK-supplied components for them. They claimed that it would not be possible to stop the supply

of such components to Israel, via the global supply pool of spare parts, or via the US for new production of aircraft, without disrupting the global F-35 programme. This exemption was the subject of a legal challenge by Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq, which concluded in 2025 with the courts allowing the government to maintain the exemption, and stating that international treaties that were not written into UK law, such as the Genocide Convention, were not subject to the court's jurisdiction. CAAT's statement following the November 2025 refusal of permission to appeal the High Court judgment sets out CAAT's analysis of some of the key legal, moral and practical issues, and the way the government's position, accepted by the courts, destroys the foundations of international law that are supposed to protect the most vulnerable in conflict.

Israel has used the F-35 intensively during the Gaza war, with one report stating that they were operating at five times the normal rate, requiring triple maintenance shifts, and placing an enormous demand on spare parts, certainly including those produced in the UK. The aircraft have been operated in so-called 'beast mode', carrying additional bombs on the wings as well as in the body of the aircraft, thus allowing them to carry four 2,000lb bombs. This is at the expense of the F-35s stealth properties, which are not needed as Gaza does not possess any air defences.

In general, it is hard to link specific air strikes committed by Israel in Gaza to specific aircraft types; Israel also uses the F-15 and F-16 (the latter the most numerous in Israel's arsenal), and all three planes carry essentially the same range of munitions. However, there is confirmation that an attack in July 2024, when Israel killed 90 people in an attack on a camp in Al Mawasi for displaced people, in what was supposedly designated a 'safe zone', was carried out by an F-35. The attack involved three 2,000lb bombs. However, the intense rate of use of the F-35, and the quantity of munitions it has carried during the war, means that it will inevitably have been used to commit other war crimes and violations on many more occasions.

The decision to continue supplying components for the F-35 to the US and other partner countries, and allowing their re-export to Israel, despite acknowledging the risk that these aircraft might be used to commit or facilitate IHL violations in Gaza, thus makes the current government deeply complicit in the genocide. It has chosen to prioritise the supply chain for a particular weapons system – and its military-industrial relationship with the US – over its international legal and moral obligation to prevent genocide.

Separately in 2024, 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. One was an incorporation SIEL, i.e. authorised for re-export after incorporation into larger systems, and one was a standard SIEL, meaning that all intended ultimate end-users were in Israel. However, the government subsequently disclosed that both licences related to a single programme for which the final customer was a NATO member. The standard SIEL was for equipment for use in "integration testing".[2]

The government has not disclosed the nature of the programme or the identity of the customer, and the ultimate end-user destinations for incorporation licences are also not typically disclosed. However, information on which countries were incorporation destinations (i.e. ultimate end-users for such licences) during 2024 quarter 4 shows that the final customer must be one of Canada, Iceland, Portugal,

2 CAAT correspondence with ECJU officials.

Romania, Spain, Sweden, or the USA. The most likely explanation is that the licences relate to the sale of Watchkeeper X UAVs to Romania. The Watchkeeper is produced for the British Army by UAV Tactical Systems (UTacS) in Leicester, a joint venture of Thales UK and Elbit Systems, and the Watchkeeper X is the export version. It is based on Elbit's Hermes 450 drone, which the Israeli military has used extensively in Gaza. Romania ordered seven Watchkeeper X Unmanned Air Systems in December 2022 in a framework contract worth $411m. Each system is understood to include 3 UAVs.[3] The first purchase order, for 3 systems worth $180m, was placed by Romania in June 2023, with Elbit Systems.[4] Elbit later stated that delivery would be delayed due to the war in Gaza.[5] Thus it appears that, although the Watchkeeper X is produced by UTacS in Britain, Elbit in Israel is also very much involved in the production. Thales produces radar systems for the Watchkeeper.[6]

While equipment exported to Israel for use by the Israeli arms industry as part of export projects is not directly used by Israel in its genocide in Gaza, these exports support Israel's arms industry and the development of Israeli military technology, which is extensively used in Gaza and the West Bank, and which is likely to continue to be so used for years to come. In particular, the UK's collaboration with Elbit Systems, one of the companies most heavily engaged in providing the weapons and technology for Israel's genocide in Gaza and system of Apartheid in the West Bank, deepens the UK's complicity in these crimes. For this reason among others, CAAT calls for a complete, two-way arms embargo on Israel, covering all export and import of military equipment.[7]

2.2 Potential Eurofighter sales to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey

The Eurofighter Typhoon, a collaboration between BAE Systems (UK), Airbus (Germany and Spain), and Leonardo (Italy), is a 4th generation combat aircraft, which entered service in 2003. Production of all aircraft is shared between the four partner nations, with final assembly in the partner buying the planes, or which negotiated the sale to export customers. As well as the partner nations, the Typhoon is used by Austria, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. The latter used the plane extensively in the bombing of Yemen, along with their US-made F-16s.

The UK is keen to make further sales of Eurofighters to maintain the production line at BAE's Warton plant in Lancashire, until the next-generation Tempest or Global Combat Air Programme – currently in the early stages of development – gets fully under way, probably in the 2030s. While **Germany**, **Spain**, and **Italy** have all recently ordered more Eurofighters, which will bring BAE and others their share of the production of each plane, final assembly will be in the buyer countries. Union leaders have **condemned** the failure of the government to maintain final manufacturing at Warton.

3 https://www.unmannedsystemstechnology.com/2022/12/romania-orders-tactical-uas-from-elbit-systems/; https://militarnyi.com/en/news/war-in-gaza-disrupts-delivery-of-watchkeeper-x-drones-to-romania/.
4 https://www.defencetoday.com/air/air-platforms/elbit-systems-to-supply-watchkeeper-x-uas-to-romania/
5 https://militarnyi.com/en/news/war-in-gaza-disrupts-delivery-of-watchkeeper-x-drones-to-romania/
6 https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/watchkeeper.htm
7 Excepting a small number of licences for items such as body armour and armoured vehicles used by journalists, UN bodies, humanitarian organisations, etc.

In this context, both BAE Systems and the UK government have pursued intensive efforts to **secure more export orders** for the Typhoon. During 2024, these concerned potential sales to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Qatar ordered 24 Eurofighters in 2017, of which 18 were delivered in 2022–23 according to SIPRI, and a further 4 in 2024. The UK entry to the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA, see section 7.2) stated that 8 were licenced for export in 2024, but not all were necessarily delivered the same year. Delivery is therefore likely to conclude in 2025. The Eurofighter order was part of a spate of orders of combat aircraft by the Gulf state between 2015–2017, which also included 36 Dassault Rafales from France, and 36 F-15s from the US (SIPRI Arms Trade Database). Many of these orders, in 2017, were linked to Qatar's severe tensions with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and were seen as an attempt to gain security guarantees from the sellers, rather than for their actual use value, as they likely exceeded the capacity of a rather small nation, and given that operating three different types of combat aircraft would involve high training and maintenance costs. The UK sale was **underwritten** by £4.5 billion of export credit guarantees, a record amount and exceeding the normal risk guidelines of UK Export Finance.

It is therefore hard to see how Qatar would have any military use for further aircraft, and in a country rated as having a **'critical' risk of corruption** in arms procurement by Transparency International Defence & Security, all such sales raise concerns. Nonetheless, Qatar **stated its intention** to buy a further 12 Eurofighters in December 2024. However, at the time of writing, it does not appear that a firm contract has been signed.

Saudi Arabia already has 72 Eurofighters. There were periodic **reports** during 2024 of a **potential sale** of a further tranche of the Typhoons (perhaps 48, according to one report). Until early 2024, such a sale faced the problem of a German veto, due to a partial arms embargo since the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi by the Saudi regime in 2018. All four partner nations must approve any sale. Germany **lifted its block** on further sales in January 2024. However, Saudi Arabia was said to be also considering French Rafales and US F-15s, and at the end of 2024, and at the time of writing, no decision had been reached.

The likely sale of Eurofighters to Turkey raises **serious concerns**, over the increasingly autocratic nature of the Erdoğan regime, its severe repression of its Kurdish population, and its continued military occupation of parts of north-east Syria, which has involved repeated bombing of civilians and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. These concerns had led to Germany blocking such a sale for a long time, but apparently no longer trouble the German government, which officially **approved** a potential sale in November 2024. Technical negotiations for the sale of up to 40 Typhoons had **already begun**, with German approval, in late 2024. Negotiations continued through 2025, and an **£8 billion deal** for the sale of 20 aircraft was signed in October 2025.

President Erdoğan has steadily eroded Turkey's (always flawed) democracy, with continued and ever intensifying repression targeted at political opposition, journalists, and especially against Kurdish communities and activists. **Reporters Without Borders** (RSF) rates Turkey 158th out of 180 states for media freedom. According to RSF, 90% of the national media is now under government control. Critical journalists and media are subject to arbitrary arrest and closure, and spurious lawsuits, with many accused of 'supporting terrorism'. Online censorship has also taken a serious turn for the worse, with the passage of a **'disinformation' law** in 2022, criminalising the sharing of information deemed to be false. Social media is regularly shut down and many accounts are banned and websites blocked.

Repression of Kurdish people

However, it has always been, and still is, the Kurdish communities and Kurdish-led political parties that have faced the most extreme repression. The repression is particularly severe in Bakur – the Kurdish majority south-east of the country. While the armed conflict in the region has, at least for the moment, ended as the Kurdish armed group the PKK has called an end to its armed struggle, the repression continues. All political and civil society organising in Bakur is subject to systematic repression with elected politicans, journalists, teachers, musicians, lawyers, and trade unionists facing regular arrests, investigations and imprisonment. Successive Kurdish political parties have been banned, alongside NGOs and other civil society organising platforms. Former HDP (Kurdish People's Democratic Party) leader Selahattin Demirtas has been imprisoned since 2016 and former MP Leyla Güven was **jailed for 22-years** in 2020 on trumped up terrorism charges.

Erdoğan frequently **sacks elected mayors** and regional governors in this region that come from pro-Kurdish parties, replacing them with kayyıms (trustees) from his party, a move permitted by a decree issued in the wake of the failed coup attempt in 2016. Since then, by the end of 2024 Erdoğan had replaced **154 elected mayors** in this way.

Syria

The most dangerous focus of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict at present is in north-east Syria, where Turkey has occupied significant territory since 2018, as part of its attacks against Kurdish forces there. The Rojava autonomous region of northern Syria – now known as the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) was formed during the Syrian civil war. The main armed force of the region is the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), of which the main part is the Kurdish-dominated People's Protection Units (YPG), which has links with the PKK.

In January 2018, Turkey launched a military operation, codenamed "Olive Branch", in the Afrin region, along with allied Syrian opposition forces, capturing the town of Afrin from the SDF. According to HIIK, at least 1,600 people were killed in this war, including at least 300 civilians, and at least 150,000 people were displaced. Turkey then launched a much larger assault in October 2019, codenamed "Peace Spring", capturing large swathes of territory, including the city of Manbij. This assault killed well over a hundred civilians, and displaced hundreds of thousands. Turkish forces and their Syrian allies were accused of ethnic cleansing, and other war crimes, including summary killings, in the course of the fighting and subsequent occupation.

The conflict reignited following the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and the coming to power of opposition forces allied with Turkey, which has seized the opportunity to renew attacks on DAANES. Militia in the region allied to Turkey have seized more territory, supported by Turkish bombing campaigns, and are threatening to lay siege to the city of Kobane – famous for its courageous resistance to Daesh in 2014–15. Turkey has bombed the Tishreen dam, cutting off water and electricity to Kobane, has frequently bombed ambulances, and in late January 2025 bombed a market place killing 8 civilians. Well over 100 people have been killed, and 100,000 civilians displaced by the advance of the Turkish-allied Syrian National Army.

Recent events in early 2026, with the military assault on the DAANES region and the SDF by the Syrian military and allied militias, have only worsened this picture. There are credible allegations that Turkey is arming these militia, some of which **allegedly have links** to the Islamic State.

The Eurofighter sale therefore represents yet another case of prioritising the interests of the arms industry, and a narrow militarised approach to regional security, over human rights and peacebuilding – on the part of all four Eurofighter partner nations, the UK, Germany, Italy, and Spain, all of whom must approve each sale.

2.3 The United Arab Emirates and the genocide in Sudan

The UAE is a mid-level arms customer for the UK, with £825m worth of single export licences issued between 2020–24 (see section 3). It is an eclectic arms buyer, with France and the USA its primary suppliers in recent years, but also receiving arms from Italy, Sweden, the UK, South Korea, Russia, Israel, and many others. The UK has recently **delivered** Seaspray Maritime Patrol Aircraft radars, to be used in Swedish GlobalEye Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft, as well as engines and air-refuelling systems for French transport/tanker aircraft, with deliveries ongoing, and has orders for Meteor air-to-air missiles for French Rafale combat aircraft.

UAE's role in arming the genocide the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has perpetrated in Sudan's civil war since 2023 was thrust into even greater prominence in October 2025, following the RSF's capture of the city of Al-Fasher in Darfur, western Sudan, and the **mass atrocities** committed by the RSF during and after the capture. Shortly before this, it was revealed that the RSF had been using **UK-supplied military equipment** previously exported to the UAE.

In 2021, the Sudanese military, then allied with the RSF, seized power in a coup. The RSF grew out of the Janjaweed militias that commtited genocide in Darfur in 2003, and were promoted by former dictator Omar al-Bashir as a powerful parallel armed force to the regular army. However, the two forces fell out in 2023 in a power struggle between Sudan's military ruler, General Abdul Fatah al-Burhan, and the RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti. While both sides have committed atrocities, the RSF has been particularly brutal. They have perpetrated **massacres and ethnic cleansing** in Darfur. A **report** by the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights in April 2024 went further, finding that the RSF was committing genocide against the Masalit non-Arab people of western Darfur. The RSF have also used starvation as a weapon of war in Darfur, leading to a **declaration of famine** in August 2024 in the Zamzam displaced persons camp near Al-Fasher. The UN has described the situation in Sudan as the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe and "**most extreme hunger crisis**".

The role of the UAE as a major supporter and arms supplier to the RSF was well-known throughout 2024. As early as January 2024, **Middle East Eye** reported on a complex network of supply chains used by the UAE to conduct arms supplies to the RSF, via Libya, Chad, and Uganda. This included a wide range of weapons and ammunition, including surface to air missiles. Meanwhile, in July 2024, Amnesty International produced a **detailed report** of recently-made arms from the UAE, Russia, Turkey, China, and others to the two sides, including UAE-made Nimr armoured vehicles. UAE-supplied equipment to the RSF however may

have come from various other countries, including as noted China and the UK. Further evidence of UAE involvement **emerged** in July 2024 with the discovery of the passports of four UAE nationals – possibly intelligence agents – in the wreckage of a vehicle in Omdurman, following its recapture from the RSF by the Sudanese military. The allegation came in documents passed to the UN, which also alleged that the UAE had supplied the RSF with drones capable of dropping powerful thermobaric bombs. A Sudanese analyst described the discovery of the passports, as well as details of arms captured from the RSF and shown to the UN, as a "smoking gun" on UAE involvement, when combined with previous evidence.

Even before the specific discovery of UK military equipment transferred from the UAE to the RSF, the risk of such diversion should have been apparent. Indeed, it is clearly recognised that the UAE poses a risk on this count. Of 22 Single Individual export or trade control licences for the UAE that were **refused** between 2015–2024, 21 were refused under criterion 7, relating to the risk of diversion, and with 18 of these this was the only grounds for refusal.[8] In other words, the UAE is a known diversion risk, and with their involvement in the war in Sudan – not to mention Libya, Yemen and elsewhere – this ought to be a flashing red light for all exports to the country.

Aside from the clear risk of diversion – which on its own should have led to a much more cautious policy in relation to export licensing to the UAE – the UK has, along with the US and other arms suppliers and allies, completely failed to hold the UAE to account for its arming of the RSF, and thus its role in perpetuating and escalating the war and genocide in Sudan. The UAE's role as a lucrative customer for western arms, and a gigantic source of investment capital for western financial markets (and sports teams), and for the US as a participant in the 'Abraham Accords' normalising relations with Israel, has clearly outweighed any concerns over its malign role in Sudan and elsewhere.

8 There were also numerous open licences rejected for the UAE, but in this case no criteria are given for the rejection, and companies may still apply for single, fixed-value export licences for some or all of the equipment and destinations refused.

3 | Arms export licences

Data on the quantity and value of military and dual-use export licences issued by the government, along with the types of equipment licences to each destination, are published by the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) within the Department for Business and Trade. They are published in annual and **quarterly** reports, and in an **online database**. The information is reproduced by CAAT in our online **data browser**, where the data is presented in a far more fine-grained and user-friendly fashion. Information on the different types of licence, the meaning of the data, and the categories of equipment on the UK **military list** are discussed in the previous annual report. A summary is shown below in box 2, and some information on these is also available on CAAT's export licences browser.

Reduced transparency

In the past, CAAT has been able to produce detailed information, broken down to the individual day, and in most cases to the individual licence, for every export licence, using an algorithm that 'scrapes' the data in the ECJU's **online searchable database**. On our online data browser, it has been possible to see, for each individual day, what equipment has been licenced to each country on that day, using what types of licence, and for SIELs, with the value of the licenced equipment broken down for that day by category on the military or dual use lists (see below). More recently, we have usually even been able to identify the different licences issued on the same day.

Unfortunately, this is currently not possible for all licences, as a result of the ECJU transitioning to a new online platform for companies applying for export licences, called LITE. This new platform is gradually being rolled out to more companies and for more types of licence, replacing the old SPIRE system. The problem that has arisen is that the ECJU's database – on which CAAT's online database depends – is linked into the old SPIRE system, and cannot obtain data from licences applied for using LITE.

As a result, the only source for LITE licences is the quarterly and annual **spreadsheets** published by the ECJU, providing overall statistics on export licensing for each period. These still provide information on what has been licenced to where, and to what value, but only aggregated for the entire year or quarter. Thus, it is not possible, even using CAAT's algorithm, to work out what licences have been issued when.

For periods covering 2023 onwards, CAAT's online database now therefore shows licence data in two forms: the more fine-grained data, broken down to the individual licence or at least day, using the SPIRE licence information that is still available from the ECJU database, and the less detailed data, aggregated on a quarterly basis, for the LITE licences, based on the quarterly spreadsheets. Moreover, at present the spreadsheets for the first three quarters of 2024 (i.e. January-September) do not include LITE licences; however, as the annual spreadsheet for 2024 does include them, it is possible to work out which LITE licences were issued in this 9-month period, by removing those issued in October-December 2024 from the annual spreadsheet. Hence, the LITE licence data for January-September 2024 is all aggregated for the whole 9-month period.

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that, using our new algorithms to work around the problems caused by the SPIRE-LITE transition, our online database does include full data for all licences, so that the total numbers and values of licences are correct.[9]

ECJU are currently working on developing a new online searchable database which will connect to the new LITE system, and which we understood will be launched once the transition is complete. This will overcome the problem discussed above. No timeline has been given for the launch of the new database.[10]

Box 2 Export licensing

The export of *controlled goods*, i.e. military goods and dual-use goods, requires an *export licence* from the government to be legal. This includes equipment, software, and technology. "Military" goods refer to goods that are specifically designed or adapted for military use, while "Dual-Use" goods refer to certain categories of goods that have both military and civilian applications.

Other types of licences, called *trade control licences* (sometimes called brokerage licences), are required for individuals or companies based in the UK, or who are UK citizens, who wish to arrange the sale of military or dual-use goods from one country to another, without the goods ever being in the UK. This report focuses primarily on export licences rather than trade control licences.

A complete list of goods subject to strategic export controls (military and dual use) is available here. They are divided into various categories, of which some of the most frequently used are:

ML1 Small arms, including rifles, handguns, sub-machine guns, and volley guns
ML2 Light weapons, including larger guns, howitzers, cannon, mortars, anti-tank weapons, projectile launchers, etc.
ML3 Ammunition and fuse-setting devices
ML4 Bombs, torpedoes, rockets, missiles, grenades etc., and countermeasures
ML5 Radars, sensors, fire control equipment, targeting equipment, and countermeasures.
ML6 Military land vehicles
ML9 Military naval vessels and naval equipment, including surface ships and submarines
ML10 Military aircraft, including fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and UAVs
ML11 Military electronic equipment, and spacecraft
ML13 Armoured or protective goods and constructions for military use (e.g. armoured plate)
ML21 Software for military use
ML22 Technology for military goods
PL5001 Security and paramilitary goods, e.g. riot shields, other riot-control equipment and vehicles

Each category also includes components and related equipment for the main items in the category.

9 If a search includes part, but not all, of a quarter, or part, but not all, of the 9 month period January-September 2024, it is not possible to give exact data, as it is likely that some, but not all, of the licences issued in those quarters/9-month period will fall within the search parameters. In this case, the list of licences that may fall within the search period are displayed, but they are not included in the totals for the number and value of licences over the search period.

10 CAAT would like to thank the ECJU Statistics department for their consultations with us over the design of the new database, and their clear and swift responses to our queries over what has been happening with the data over the transition period. This has made it much easier for us to adapt our online database to the new situation, and in turn to present accurate information to our users.

There are three main types of export licence:

1. Single Individual Export Licences (SIELs). These authorise the transfer of a fixed quantity of specified equipment to an end-user in a particular country, up to a maximum value. Usually valid for 2 years. These are the only type of export licence to which a financial value is attached.
2. Open Individual Export Licences (OIELs). These authorise the transfer of unlimited quantities of specified goods to end-users in one or more destination countries, with no limit on value. Generally valid for 3 or 5 years.
3. Open General Export Licences (OGELs). These are pre-issued licences, covering one or more destinations and a specified list of goods or categories of goods. Companies may register for these OGELs, after which, subject to certain conditions, they can export unlimited quantities and values of goods covered by the licence to the listed destinations.

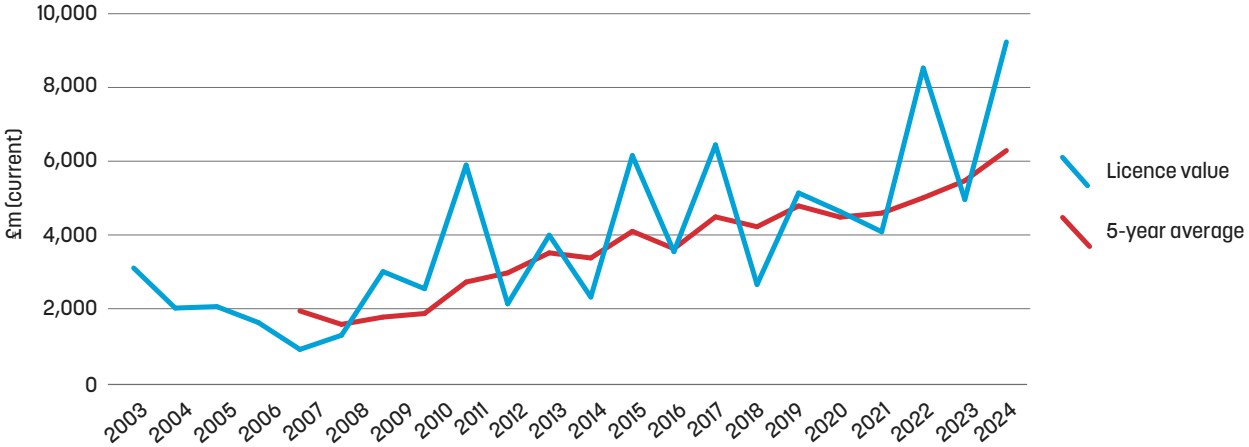
Some OGELs relate to specific programmes (e.g. Eurofighter Typhoon or the F-35 combat aircraft). Others relate to specific, limited purposes, such as for display at an exhibition. Others cover a wide range of equipment to a long list of countries. A full list of valid OGELs can be found here.

For more information, see CAAT's previous annual report, or the government's Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls.

Export licence data for 2024

The value of Single Individual Export Licences (SIELs) issued in 2024 for items on the Military List was £9,234 million, an increase of 86% over the £4,961 million figure from 2023. This is a record high in nominal terms, although the 2022 figure of £8,527m was slightly higher after accounting for inflation. As SIELs are only one type of licence, not too much weight should be placed on the value of single licences in one year. As figure 1 shows, the value of SIELs issued often fluctuates dramatically from year to year. Nonetheless, the total value of SIELs over the period 2020–24, of £31.4 billion, was a record in both nominal and real terms. It represents an increase of 9.1% in real terms compared to 2019–23. Generally, this figure has shown a steady increasing trend since 2008. This remains the case when accounting for inflation, although the trend is more uneven. The 5-year average has increased in real terms every year from 2016–20 to 2020–24.

Figure 1 UK single export licence value 2003–24



A total of 1,811 Open Individual Export Licences (OIELs) were issued in 2024 for items on the Military List, an increase of 53% from 2023.[11] The number of OIELs issued should be treated with caution, as no information is provided on the value of exports conducted under an individual OIEL; some may be used frequently to export high value equipment, while others may be used only occasionally to export low-value equipment. Evidence from FOIs suggests that many OIELs go to fairly small or medium-sized companies which, given their overall level of revenues, cannot be making huge levels of exports, even if the OIELs they hold theoretically permit them to. Moreover, as OIELs are valid for 3–5 years, exports will most likely have been conducted in 2024 using OIELs issued as far back as 2019.

194 Trade Control licences (SITCLs and OITCLs) were issued in 2024, compared to 157 in 2023.[12]

A significant, but unknown, proportion of UK arms exports is also conducted using Open General Export Licences. The number of OGELs that are valid at any one time for military list items is fairly steady, and changes do not give any indication of an increase or decrease in the level of exports.

The top 10 destinations for SIELs by value in 2024, and the top ten for the 5-year period 2020–2024, are shown in tables 1 and 2. **Saudi Arabia** was by far the top destination for military SIELs by value in 2024, at £2,979 million, followed by **Ukraine**, **Qatar**, **the USA**, and **the Netherlands**. Over the 5-year period 2020–24, the top five destinations by value were **Saudi Arabia**, **Qatar**, **the USA**, **Ukraine**, and **France**. The value of SIELs to the US has remained consistently high for over a decade, although it appears, comparing with other data, that the majority of UK arms exports to the US are conducted using open licences. These include the OGEL covering the F-35 programme (see our arms to Israel report), and a dedicated OGEL covering the US-UK Defence Cooperation agreement.

The majority of the £2,979m licenced to Saudi Arabia was in the ML4 category covering bombs, missiles, grenades etc. and their associated components and launch equipment, as well as countermeasures such as bomb disposal and demining equipment. £1,657m of the total fell in this category, followed by £968m in the ML10 category covering aircraft and its components.

The majority of the latter was from a single licence in February covering combat helicopters and military helicopters, worth £950 million. Information in the UK's return to the UN Register of Conventional Arms shows that 20 combat helicopters were included in this licence. However, the type of combat helicopter is unknown, and no contract for such weaponry has been publicised by either the buyer or seller. The transfer is nor recorded in SIPRI's Arms Transfers Database, and a FOI request asking for the type of helicopters involved and the identity of the licencee was refused.

It is possible that the licence covered helicopters that were produced in another country, then transferred to the UK to be fitted with key subsystems (e.g. radars), before being transferred to Saudi Arabia as the final customer, or that they were helicopters already owned by Saudi Arabia, that were sent to the UK for upgrades, and subsequently returned. It seems unlikely that this licence represents new

11 The figures given here are for the number of OIEL destinations; OIELs frequently authorise exports to multiple destinations, so, for example, a single OIEL with 10 destinations included is counted here as 10 towards the total.

12 This is based on counting each destination approved within the same overall licence as a separate case. The number of trade control licences issued appears to be reported in the government database in a variety of different ways. It is therefore not particularly meaningful to compare numbers of trade control licences from year to year.

production of helicopters in the UK for sale to Saudi Arabia, as such a substantial deal would almost certainly have been trumpeted, at least in regional media, for the jobs it would create or sustain, and there has been no such media coverage.

This very large transfer of lethal equipment – Saudi Arabia used attack helicopters extensively in its brutal war on Yemen – thus remains shrouded in secrecy.

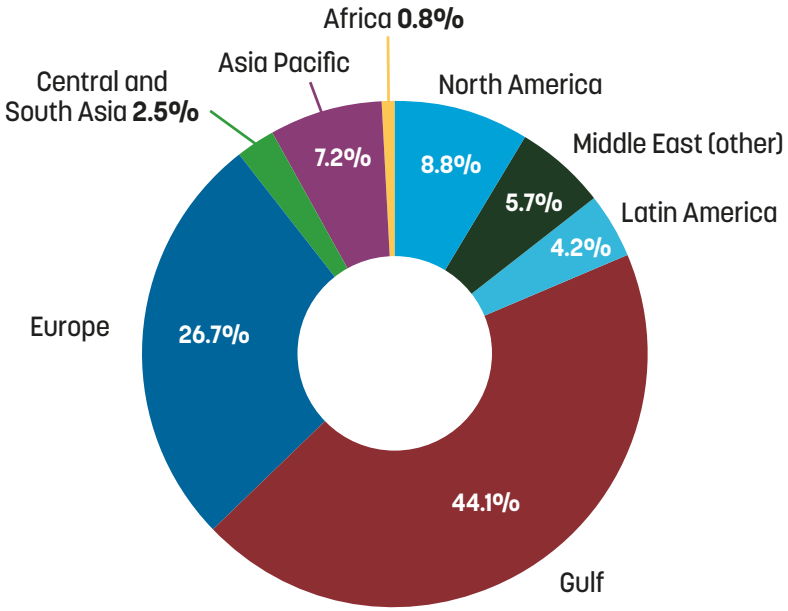
Over the period 2020–24, £4.2 billion out of the total £6.4 billion worth of military SIELs issued for export to Saudi Arabia were in the ML4 (bombs, missiles etc.) category. The great majority of these related to components for bombs – almost certainly the guidance systems for the Paveway IV guided bombs produced by Raytheon UK in Glenrothes, Scotland – air-to-surface missiles (Brimstones and/or Storm Shadow missiles produced by MBDA), air-to-air missiles (probably MBDA Meteors), and surface-to-air missiles, including missiles for Man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS).

Most of the £810 million worth of licences to Qatar was for the remaining 8 Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft, of the 24 ordered in 2018. According to SIPRI, 4 of these were estimated to have been delivered during 2024, but as the licence is valid for 2 years, it would still cover the final 4 if they are delivered in 2025 or early 2026.

The largest share of the £1,083m licenced to Ukraine was in the M4 (bombs, missiles, etc.) category (£454m), followed by ML10 (aircraft & components, £252m), ML6 (armoured vehicles and their components, £98m), and ML11 (other electronic equipment, £96m).

Breaking down the figures by region (See figure 2), 50% of the value of SIELs in 2024 was to the Middle East, including 44% to the Gulf states; 27% to Europe, 9.7% to Asia and the Pacific, 8.8% to the US and Canada, 4.2% to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 0.8% to Africa. Apart from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, other significant Middle East recipients were Turkey (£325m), the UAE (£202m), and Israel (£142m). In Europe, after Ukraine and the Netherlands, the biggest recipients were France (£298m), Italy (£250m), and Germany (£93m). In Asia and the Pacific, the biggest recipients were India (£221m), Australia (£186m), Singapore (£156m), and South Korea (£147m).

Figure 2 Export licence value by region 2024



Over the period 2020–2024, there was a similar picture, although there was more to North America and less to the Middle East: 43% to the Middle East, of which 37% to the Gulf states; 28% to Europe, 15% to North America, 11.5% to Asia and the Pacific, 2.7% to Latin America, and 0.9% to Africa.

In terms of the categories of military equipment licenced, by SIEL value, in contrast to previous years, the ML4 category of bombs, missiles, grenades, torpedoes etc. was the largest, at £3.1 million, followed by the normally dominant category of ML10, aircraft and components, at £2.9m. Next came ML3 (ammunition) at £529m, ML5 (radars and sensors, target acquisition, weapons control, countermeasures etc.) at £437m, ML11 (other electronic equipment) at £383m, ML14 (military training equipment) at £324, and ML1 (small arms) at £310m. By far the bulk of the small arms licences were to the USA (£140m) and Australia (£85m).

Table 1 Top 10 destinations for SIELs by value 2024

Rank	Recipient	SIELs 2024	
		Value (£m)	% of total
1	Saudi Arabia	2,979	32.3
2	Ukraine	1,083	11.7
3	Qatar	810	8.8
4	USA	767	8.3
5	Netherlands	435	4.7
6	Brazil	333	3.6
7	Turkey	325	3.5
8	France	290	3.1
9	Italy	258	2.8
10	India	221	2.4

Table 2 Value of SIELs by destination 2020–24

Rank	Recipient	SIELs 2020–24	
		Value (£m)	% of total
1	Saudi Arabia	6,353	20.2
2	Qatar	4,132	13.1
3	United States	3,828	12.2
4	Ukraine	1,900	6.0
5	France	1,355	4.3
6	Turkey	1,214	3.9
7	India	1,108	3.5
8	Italy	984	3.1
9	UAE	825	2.6
10	Canada	763	2.4

4 Information on military aid to Ukraine

There are four key sources for UK military aid to Ukraine: 1) The House of Commons Library publishes regular research briefings on UK and international military aid to Ukraine. This tends to detail new announcements of aid packages, and other policy developments, as well as the total value of aid; 2) The UK government's Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls (see section 6.1) lists actual equipment gifted by the MOD; 3) The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database details transfers of major conventional weapons from the UK to Ukraine; and 4) The UK return to the UN Register of Conventional Weapons (UNROCA, see section 6.3).

These four sources of course overlap, but provide different types of information: the HoC Library briefings primarily concern announcements of future aid, not all of which will occur in the same calendar year, while the other two both concern actual transfers. The SIPRI database only covers major conventional weapons, whereas the Annual Report includes small arms and ammunition, and other supplies not covered by the SIPRI definition; however, the SIPRI database includes transfers that are not military aid from the MOD, and sometimes gives more information, or at least estimates, on numbers of items transferred.

The House of Commons Library

The most recent briefing from the House of Commons Library was in July 2025.[13] **This gives the figure for total UK military to aid to Ukraine since the Russian invasion at £13.06 billion pledged, as well as £5.2 billion non-military aid.** The military aid includes £10.8 billion of equipment, training, and other support gifted by the MOD, and a further £2.26b in one-off financing agreed by the G7 **"Extraordinary Revenue Loans" agreement**, to be paid back from the sale of frozen Russian state assets. **Total military aid for 2024/25 was £2.5b, with £3.5b announced for 2025/26.**

The briefing lists the following key arms transfers, support packages, and pledges made in 2024:

- 200 more Brimstone air-to-surface missiles announced by the MOD in February 2024, along with £245m to replenish artillery ammunition
- At least £345m of the £2.5m aid in 2024/25 to be spent on the rapid production and procurement of thousands of military drones
- In April 2024, then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced an additional £500m military aid in 2024/25, to cover ammunition, air defence missiles, drones, and engineering support. He also announced:
  - 1,600 Storm Shadow long-range strike missiles and air defence missiles
  - More than 400 armoured vehicles, including AS-90 artillery guns
  - 60 boats
  - 4 million rounds of small arms ammunition

13 https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9914/

- On 2 May 2024, the UK announced that Ukraine could use UK-supplied weapons to strike targets in Russia. This did not apply to Storm Shadows, which include US components and therefore also required US permission (which was not granted until November 2024).
- In July 2024, the new Labour government announced a package including artillery, ammunition, and 90 more Brimstone anti-armour missiles. They also announced an additional £40 million for a multinational fund to support counter-drone protection, demining, and rehabilitation of injured personnel.
- The UK and Ukraine further announced that Ukraine would have access to £3.5 billion in UK Export Finance, i.e. loans and insurance packages to finance arms deals from UK companies to Ukraine.
- In September 2024, the government announced they would supply 650 light-weight multi-role missiles for air defence.[14]
- In December 2024, a further £225m package was announced, including maritime drones and boats, air defence systems and counter-drone systems.

The Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls

The Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls, published in July 2025, lists the following equipment gifted by the MOD to Ukraine:

- approximately 1,000 short and medium range surface-to-air missiles including LMM, as well as several air defence systems
- dozens of artillery systems, and more than 160,000 artillery rounds
- more than 600 armoured vehicles, protected mobility and logistic support vehicles
- over 5,000 units of communication, SATCOMS, radar, electronic warfare, GPS systems and surveillance and targeting equipment
- over 6,500 infrastructure and engineering items including generators, maintenance and bridging capabilities
- more than 8,500 uncrewed systems
- approximately 8,500 spares, vehicle spares, ancillaries, parts, tools, support kits, medical items and PPE
- approximately 40,000 weapons systems including small arms
- approximately 7 million rounds of ammunition including small arms ammunition and anti-armour weapons
- over 3,000 items of maritime equipment including boats, spares and lifesaving items
- Long range missiles and 5,330 sets of F-16 protective countermeasures

14 Presumably LLM Martlet multi-role missiles made by Thales UK in Northern Ireland

The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database

SIPRI lists the following transfers of major conventional weapons from the UK to Ukraine in 2024, all second-hand military aid unless otherwise stated. Numbers in square brackets are estimated.

Number	Equipment	Notes
160	MXT-MV armoured vehicles	Husky version
[1500]	Paveway IV guided bombs	
[2]	Stormer armoured personnel carriers	
[50]	LMM Martlett multi-role missiles	New (Thales UK)
[16]	AS-90B Mallet 155mm self-propelled guns	
[90]	Brimstone-2 air-to-surface missiles	New (MBDA)
[30]	BvS-10 armoured personnel carriers	
[100]	ASRAAM long-range air-to-air missiles	For use as surface-to-air missiles
[160]	Spartan armoured personnel carriers	
[100]	Starstreak surface-to-air missiles	Designation uncertain – reported as "defence missiles"

The UN Register of Conventional Armaments (UNROCA)

Finally, the UK's submission to UNROCA (see section 6.3) provides more details on some equipment transferred. The items listed include:

- 5 Challenger 2 battle tanks
- 168 Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance Tracked (CVRT) – various variants
- 1 IVECO LMV Light Multirole Vehicles 4X4
- 2 Pinzgauer Vector 718 6X6 Armoured Patrol Vehicles
- 39 Mastiff patrol vehicles
- 1 Ridgback patrol vehicle
- 20 FV107 Scimitar armoured personnel carriers
- 20 Warthog Armoured All Terrain Command Variants
- 10 Warthog Armoured All Terrain Repair Recovery Vehicles
- 28 FV4323 APCs
- 1 Mercedes Vario
- 4 Pinzgauer armoured utility vehicles
- 2 Alvis Shielders
- 1 RAVEN air defence system
- 2 FV436 command & control vehicles
- 1 FV439 Signals vehicle
- 3 Sultan FV105 Command CVRT
- 3 Shielder CVRTs
- 3 Stormer CVRTs
- 29 CVRT FV103 Spartan Armoured Personnel Carriers
- 1 CVRT FV104 Samaritan Armoured Personal Carrier
- 33 Spartan CVRTs
- 15 Scimitar CVRTs

- 10 Sultan CVRTs
- 4 Samaritan CVRTs
- 4 Samson CVRTs
- 48 AS90 self-propelled howitzers
- 2301 Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles

There are clearly some inconsistencies between these sources, and some reported in one have not been reported in others. For example, the more than 600 armoured vehicles reported in the Annual Report are not matched either by the SIPRI or the UNROCA data. Missile transfers reported by both SIPRI (with estimated numbers) and the Annual Report (with neither) are not reported in UNROCA. Ultimately, given the fluidity of the situation, the large volume and rapidity of transfers, and the government's general disinterest in providing comprehensive, accurate, and transparent information, it may be difficult or impossible to obtain a full picture of UK arms supplies to Ukraine.

As discussed in section 3, military aid donated by the MOD to Ukraine (or other recipients) does not require an export licence. However, if the MOD pays for UK companies to produce and sell equipment to Ukraine (as opposed to donations of second-hand equipment already owned by the MOD), these would require export licences unless they were first acquired by the MOD prior to donation. Equipment procured and paid for by the UK from third countries for supply to Ukraine would also not require UK export licences (or brokerage licences), although they would require export licences from the producer country.

5 SIPRI data on transfers of major conventional weapons

The SIPRI **Arms Transfers Database** (ATDB) is the only publicly-available source of comprehensive, comparable, and consistent arms trade data with global coverage.[15] It provides both qualitative and quantitative data, broken down to each supplier-recipient pair.

The SIPRI ATDB covers only "major conventional weapons" (MCW) – this largely consists of complete weapons and weapons systems, such as military aircraft, naval vessels (surface and submarine), tanks and armoured vehicles, missiles, air defence systems, and artillery. However it covers some major subsystems, such as military radars (e.g. for surveillance or targeting), and engines for military aircraft, ships, and vehicles.[16]

What the ATDB does *not* cover is small arms and light weapons, components and subsystems (except those mentioned above), military command, control, and communications systems, and military services. Since a large proportion of UK arms exports are in the form of military services, this tends to understate the size of the UK arms trade.

To provide a comparable quantitative measure of the volume of arms transfers between each supplier and recipient and in total, SIPRI constructs its own bespoke "Trend Indicator Value" (TIV) measure. This is necessary because price information is not always publicly available. The TIV is not a financial measure, and should never be cited as if it were a dollar figure. Rather, it attempts in some sense to measure the military value of equipment transferred. The TIV assigned to a weapon system is, for US systems, based on its unit cost, and for non-US systems, on SIPRI's assessment of the nearest equivalent US system in terms of capabilities. For example, a Eurofighter Typhoon is given about the same TIV as a US F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.[17]

Data for 2020–24

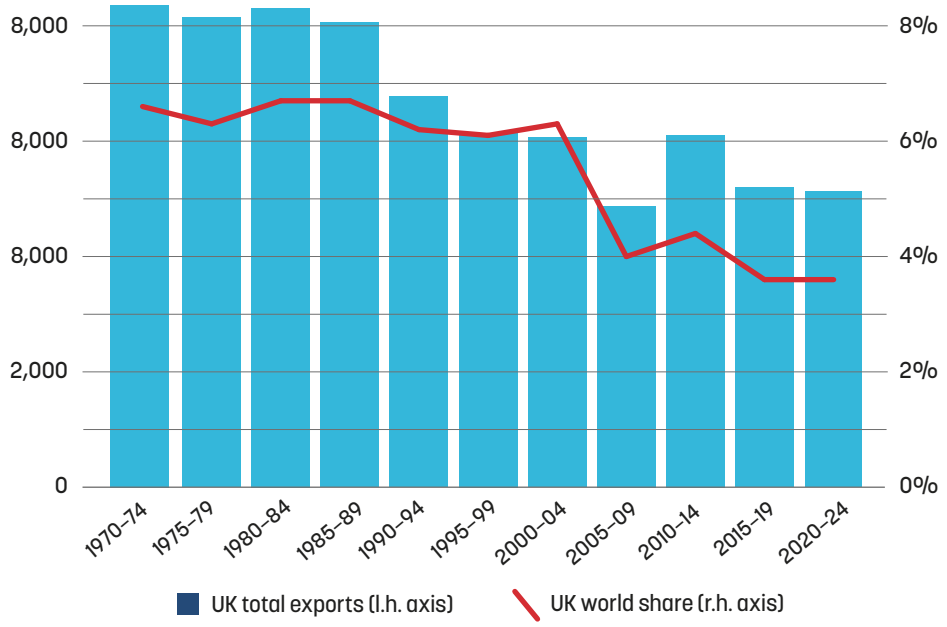
According to SIPRI's **data release** for 2024, **the UK accounted for 3.6% of global deliveries of major conventional weapons between 2020 and 2024, as measured by the TIV. This was a slight fall from the 2019–23 figure of 3.7%. The UK remained in 7th place among the world's major exporters**, behind the US, France, Russia, China, Germany, and Italy.

In absolute terms, the TIV of UK arms exports fell slightly, by 1.4%, compared to 2015–19. The 5-year moving average of UK arms deliveries peaked in 2017, with the delivery of Eurofighter Typhoons to Saudi Arabia and Oman, then fell sharply up to 2021 (figure 3), before rising somewhat over the last few years. Deliveries fell in the single year 2024, with fewer Typhoon and related deliveries to Qatar than in

15 https://sipri.org/databases/armstransfers
16 More details of the coverage of the ATDB and its sources and methods at https://sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/sources-and-methods
17 The TIV value of any system of which at least one example has been delivered for export can be found in the Excel download version of the SIPRI ATDB, available at https://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/tiv/index.php.

the previous year, and despite continued military aid deliveries to Ukraine. While significant, these do not contribute as much to the TIV of UK exports as the volume might suggest, as most are second-hand, which are rated as lower value by SIPRI than new equipment. A full list of deliveries of MCW by the UK, as well as new orders, recorded in the SIPRI ATDB, are shown in tables 3–4. This does not include transfers to Ukraine, which are covered in section 4.

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



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database

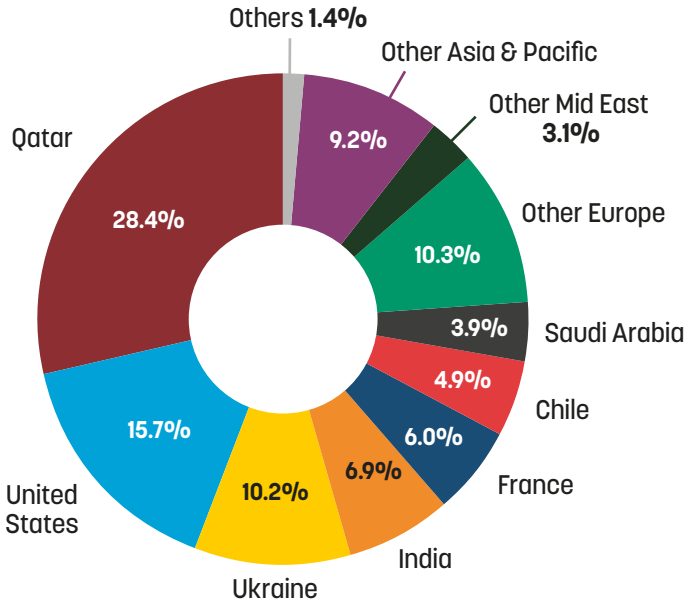
Apart from the 4 Typhoons to Qatar, there were few deliveries of major platforms by the UK in 2024 – only 5 light helicopters to Australia, one anti-submarine helicopter to Poland, and a second-hand Hercules transport aircraft to Bangladesh. Other deliveries included missiles, engines for aircraft and ships, radar systems, and air refuelling systems.

Principal recipients

The top recipients of UK major arms deliveries in 2020–24 (figure 4), 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 from 2019–23, except for India and France swapping places. There have now been a total of 18 Eurofighter combat aircraft delivered to Qatar during this period, as well as Hawk trainers and various missiles. After these, Chile and Saudi Arabia were the largest recipients.

In general, as Figure 4 shows, the Middle East, in particular the Gulf states, Europe, and the USA were the main recipient countries and regions. A total of 16.1% went to countries in Asia and the Pacific, including 8.4% to South Asia, mostly India but some to Bangladesh and Pakistan, and 7.7% to East & South-East Asia and Australasia, with Japan, New Zealand, and Indonesia the chief recipients. Latin America received 6.2% of UK arms deliveries, mostly Chile with the rest to Brazil, while just 0.1% went to Africa (included in the “Others” category).

Figure 4 Recipients of UK major conventional weaons 2020–2024



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database

Saudi Arabia – missing transfers

SIPRI data on UK exports to Saudi Arabia leave out a significant quantity of recent exports of bombs and missiles to Saudi Arabia between 2020–24, including £1,140 million worth of air-to-surface missiles (likely MBDA Brimstone and/or Storm Shadow missiles), and £500 million of air-to-air missiles (likely MBDA Meteor missiles).[18] No new orders or deliveries of such missiles are recorded in the the ATDB since 2019, although some deliveries of Thales UK LMM Martlet multirole missiles (probably for use as, and licenced as, surface-to-air missiles, including for use with MANPADS), have been recorded. Of course, licences issued in 2024 may not have been fully used in the same year, and indeed information on the second half of 2024 was not published until after SIPRI data for 2024 was completed and published. Of the figures above, £800 million of air-to-surface missiles were issued in 2024.

The problem for SIPRI is that these exports most likely take place under the umbrella Al Salam and Al Yamamah government-to-government agreements between the UK and Saudi Arabia, and thus there are no separate contracts made public to base data on. Deliveries of items such as bombs and missiles likewise typically take place "under the radar", and indeed most SIPRI data for numbers of such items ordered and delivered are typically estimates.

18 There have also been £2,315 million worth of licences for "components for bombs". The latter are almost certainly Raytheon UK guidance systems for Paveway IV guided bombs, which were previously delivered as complete weapons to Saudi Arabia (and recorded in the SIPRI database), but which may now be assembled in Saudi Arabia. Under such an arrangement, SIPRI would typically still treat this as a UK export, with local assembly. However, it now appears that most of these may never have been delivered. The licences include three almost identical ones, for £698m each, issued in August 2020, June 2022, and August 2024. However, Raytheon UK's Annual Report for 2021 states that they have had to recognise a substantial loss, of hundreds of millions of pounds, due to the inability to fulfil a contract with a Middle Eastern customer for precision guided munutions, due to the failure to gain US regulatory approval. As the Paveways are based on US technology, they require a US export licence as well as one from the UK. In January 2021, the Biden administration imposed a ban on the sale of precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia on account of the war in Yemen. Thus, what appears to have happened is that Raytheon received the original licence in 2020, but were unable to make deliveries before the UK ban came in place. They received a new licence in 2022, not long before the original licence was due to expire, but were still unable to use it as the Biden administration maintained the ban. Finally, they received a third licence in August 2024, around the time the US ban was lifted. Hence, the first £1,400m worth of licences were never used.

The SIPRI arms transfers team are aware of the issue, and are working on ways to correct this and make plausible estimates of the number and type of such bombs and missiles exported, but this is a very challenging task, given the lack of transparency from the UK government.

Table 3 UK deliveries of major conventional weapons in 2024 (SIPRI)

(Not including military aid to Ukraine). Country name in brackets: delivery year uncertain. Numbers in square brackets are estimates.

Recipient	Producer	Equipment delivered	Notes
Australia	Airbus	5 EC135 light helicopters	
Bangladesh	Second-hand	1 C130J Hercules transport aircraft	3rd of 5 ordered in 2019
(Brazil)	MBDA	[10] Meteor long-range air-to-air missiles	For Gripen-E combat aircraft from Sweden
France	Mission Systems Wimborne	[2] air refuelling systems	For A400 and A330 MRTT tanker/transport aircraft produced in France
India	MBDA	[119] ASRAAM air-to-air missiles	
Italy	Rolls-Royce	2 MT-30 gas turbine engines	For Trieste aircraft carrier/amphibious assault ship produced in Italy
Japan	Rolls-Royce	[2] MT-30 gas turbine engines	For Mogami (FFM or 30DDX) frigates produced in Japan; engines prob. assembled or produced under licence in Japan
Japan	Unknown	2 air refuelling systems	For KC-46A tanker/transport aircraft from USA
NATO	Rolls-Royce	2 Trent-700 turbofan engines	for A-330 MRTT tanker/transport aircraft from France
NATO	Mission Systems Wimborne	1 air refuelling system	For A-330 MRTT tanker/transport aircraft from France
(Poland)	Leonardo	1 AW101-111 anti-submarine helicopter	
Qatar	BAE Systems	[4] Typhoon block 20 combat aircraft	
(Qatar)	Raytheon	[125] Paveway IV guided bombs	For Typhoon combat aircraft
(Qatar)	MBDA	[50] ASRAAM long-range air-air missiles	For Typhoon combat aircraft
(Qatar)	Rolls-Royce	[1] EJ-200 turbofan engine	Spare for Typhoon combat aircraft
South Korea	Rolls-Royce	1 MT-30 gas turbine engine	For 6 Ulsan Batch-3 (FFX-3) frigates produced in South Korea
Spain	Mission Systems Wimborne	1 air refuelling system	For modification of Spanish A330 transport aircraft to A330 MRTT tanker/transport aircraft
Sweden	Leonardo	1 Raven ES-05 combat aircraft radar	For Gripen-E combat aircraft produced in Sweden.
UAE	Leonardo	2 Seaspray maritime patrol aircraft radar	For 2 GlobalEye AEW&C aircraft from Sweden
UAE	Rolls-Royce	[2] Trent-700 turbofan engines	For A-330 MRTT tanker/transport aircraft from France
UAE	Mission Systems Wimborne	1 air refuelling system	For A-330 MRTT tanker/transport aircraft from France

Table 4 New orders of major conventional weapons from the UK in 2024

Country name in brackets: order year uncertain, or equipment has been selected but contract not yet signed.. Numbers in square brackets are estimates.

Recipient	Producer	Equipment ordered	Notes
Australia	Airbus	EC-135 light helicopters	Already delivered, see table 3
Germany	MBDA	[3266] Brimstone air-to-air missiles	Brimstone-3 version; incl production under licence in Germany; for use on Typhoon combat aircraft.
India	Leonardo	15 Seaspray-7000 maritime patrol aircraft radar	For 15 SeaGuardian armed drones from USA
(India)	Thales	[1200] Starstreak surface-to-air missiles	'VSHORAD' programme; incl production under licence in India; selected but not yet ordered by end-2024
(Italy)	MBDA	Unknown no. SPEAR surface-air missiles	For F-35B combat aircraft; selected but not yet ordered by end-2024
Portugal	Thales	Unknown no. LMM Martlett multi-role missiles	For Forceshield SAM systems
Portugal	Thales	2 Forceshield air defence systems	Very Short Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) system
(Qatar)	BAE Systems	12 Typhoon combat aircraft	Selected 2024 but not yet ordered by end-2024
Saudi Arabia	Wimborne Mission Systems	4 air refuelling systems	For 4 A-330 MRTT tanker/transport aircraft from France
Sweden	Leonardo	1 Seaspray-7000 maritime patrol aircraft radar	For 1 GlobalEye (S-106) AEW aircraft produced in Sweden; Seaspray-7500E version
Uruguay	Second-hand	1 EMB-120 Brasilia transport aircraft	

6 Other sources of information

6.1 The Government's Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls

The government's Annual Report on Strategic Export Controls for 2024 was published on 17 July 2025.[19] This does not contain details of export licences issued and refused, which are presented separately (see section 1), but there are a number of elements that are relevant for monitoring UK arms exports:

- Data on refusals of export licences, and the criteria under which they were refused
- Brief case studies of particular countries and issues, and how these were dealt with under the export licensing process
- Data on enforcement actions for export control violations by HMRC
- Information on UK government gifts of military equipment to other countries, and disposals (through sale) to foreign governments of surplus MOD equipment.

The Annual Report also acts in some ways as the clearest permanent record of the export licensing process and criteria in any given year.

One piece of arms export data in the report that is not available in any other source is a list of equipment gifted by the MOD or other UK government departments to overseas militaries or law enforcement. Excluding Ukraine, the report details around £3.3m worth of gifted equipment, much of which consists of counter-IED equipment, or is for the UN in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). However there were also a fair number of donations of drones to various law enforcement agencies. The report also details the resale of a small number of surplus MOD items.

More significantly, the Annual Report provides another source detailing MOD equipment gifted to Ukraine during 2024, as discussed in section 4.

6.2 Revenue data from the Joint Economic Data Hub (JEDHub)

This is a relatively new source of data, that only started being published in 2022. According to its website, "The Joint Economic Data Hub (JEDHub), based in the UK Defence Solutions Centre, is a collaborative initiative to improve understanding of the defence sector's contribution to the UK economy. Designed to provide better, consistent, and impartial data, the JEDHub is supported by government, industry and academia."

19 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-strategic-export-controls-annual-report-2024

The UK Defence Solutions Centre is itself an offshoot of the government-industry forum the Defence Growth Partnership, and is a collaboration between government, arms industry, and universities, aimed at promoting the development of military technology, including exports. While this is clearly not a neutral source of information, they are at least reasonably open about their methodology, and their publications are reviewed by outside defence economics experts, including at least one with a fairly critical approach to the arms industry.

The annual economic reports published by JEDHub provide data on arms industry turnover, employment, value added, and a range of other areas, mostly based on a survey of the largest arms companies. Its data is therefore not comprehensive, but probably covers the great majority of arms industry turnover with external customers (UK MOD, other departments, and export customers), as opposed to supply chain sales within the industry. However, the figures will clearly be underestimates to some degree.

The **Annual Economic Report 2025** was published in October 2025. It was based on a survey conducted in 2024, with data for 2022 and 2023.

The 2024 survey received a poorer response rate than the previous one, with 16 companies responding, compared to 21 in the previous survey, published in the 2024 AER. Therefore, the results cannot really be directly compared with the previous report. However, the figures for the two years allow for some indication of the trend. The companies that responded included most of the largest arms and military services companies in the UK. The largest company (based on its UK defence revenue) that responded in the 2023 survey but not 2024 was services company Serco.

The report found that total defence-related revenue of the surveyed of the 16 companies that responded increased from £21.4b in 2022 to £24.1b in 2023, an increase of 13%. Of this, revenue from international customers (i.e. arms export revenue) increased from £7.7b to £8.2b, an increase of 6.6%. This is consistent with the increasing trend in arms export orders reported by UK Defence & Security Exports in previous years (see **CAAT's annual report for 2023**). The regional breakdown of this revenue in 2023 was similar with that reported from other sources and types of data (orders, licences, SIPRI data etc.): 45% from the Middle East, 23% from North America, 22% from Europe, and 9% from Asia and the Pacific, with just 1% from Africa and Latin America combined.

The report found a very substantial increase in the number of jobs in defence activities from the surveyed companies, from 82,300 Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) in 2022 to 98,710 in 2023, a 20% increase. Of these, 33%, or 32,870 FTE, were supported by international revenue. The report estimated 93,270 indirect jobs supported by the defence activities of these companies (i.e. jobs in the supply chain, which includes in civilian industries), which would translate to about 31,000 FTE supported by arms exports.

6.3 UK annual report for the Arms Trade Treaty/submission to UNROCA

Each year, all UN member states are invited to submit a report to the UN Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA),[20] detailing their exports and imports and, optionally, holdings, of certain classes of major conventional weapons, as well as transfers of small arms and light weapons (SALW). The UK usually submits these reports annually. Additionally, states parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) are required by the Treaty to submit an annual report with similar information on exports and imports. Many states, including the UK, submit the same report to both. While the reports are supposed to cover actual deliveries, the UK reports cover equipment licenced for export, as the UK does not keep records of deliveries.

The UK report is often riddled with errors, omissions, and superfluous information, such as reporting components as major conventional weapons, reporting of large quantities of vintage armoured vehicles and artillery for display and individual collections, return of items that have been sent to the UK for upgrades, repair, or display, and omission of items that should have been reported based on export licensing.

For example, in 2024, licences were issued for export to Saudi Arabia for £100m worth of surface-to-air missiles, £400m of air-to-surface missiles, and an unlimited OIEL for MANPADS missiles, but no such items are declared in the UK report for 2024.

The report nonetheless contains some useful information, in particular giving more detail on transfers to Ukraine, which unlike the other entries, represent actual deliveries, as they are donations from the government that do not require licences. These transfers are discussed in section 4.

Otherwise, UNROCA entries that correspond to genuine exports of major weapons, rather than misreporting of museum pieces or equipment produced elsewhere in the UK for repair, modification, or exhibition, before transfer to the reported destination, are covered by the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database.

20 https://www.unroca.org/

7 Conclusions

The trend in UK arms exports in 2024, and over the past 5–10 years, is not completely clear. On the one hand, the 5-year average of the value of single export licences has been steadily increasing in recent years, and the single-year figure for 2024 was at a record high in nominal terms. On the other hand, SIPRI data on transfers of major conventional weapons shows a value 'bumping along the bottom' over the past 5 years or so, although slightly higher than record lows a few years ago. The lack of contracts data for 2024 from UK Defence & Security Exports further muddies the picture.

What is unquestionable is the government's increasing efforts to promote UK arms exports, which has met with some success in the last few years, with deals such as the AUKUS submarine deal with Australia, and potential Eurofighter sales to Qatar and (signed in 2025) Turkey.

The customers for UK arms sales continue to be dominated by the Gulf states and NATO allies in Europe and the US, as well as Ukraine, where the value and volume of UK arms exports increased sharply in 2024. Transfers to Ukraine are mostly military aid, which the government has pledged to maintain, but there has also been an increasing level of commercial sales, evidenced by an increase in the value of export licences issued to UK companies (donations from the MOD do not require an export licence). While in the early 2020s there was some sign of a shift towards European customers compared to those in the Middle East, the value of export licences to the latter increased significantly in 2024.

Transparency in UK arms exports deteriorated in 2024, as the progressive roll-out of the new LITE online platform for export licence applications, which does not connect to the government's online searchable database of export licences, meant that the quality and level of detail of published export licence information was severely curtailed. It is hoped that this will be rectified if and when a new online database is completed that will work with LITE.

The biggest policy decision taken by the new Labour government that took office in July 2024 was the September decision that recognised that Israel was not committed to observing International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Gaza, and as a result to suspend 29 export licences for military equipment to Israel that could be used in Gaza, and to stop issuing such licences – but to continue to allow the export to Israel of components for the F-35 combat aircraft, provided that these exports were indirect, via the United States and other F-35 partner nations. This made an appearance of significant change, while maintaining what was almost certainly

the biggest contribution of the UK arms trade to Israel's genocidal war in Gaza. By creating an ad-hoc exemption to the government's own export licensing criteria, and effectively setting aside the UK's international obligations to the Arms Trade Treaty and the Genocide Convention, the government shredded the last pretence that the UK follows a 'rigorous' or 'robust' export licensing system (even if they continue to use such terms). In recent months, there has been an increasing recognition by western leaders that the "international rule-based order" is dead, and as Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney acknowledged, that it had always been at least in part an illusion. But the supposed rule-based order was already destroyed by the support provided by its leading advocates to Israel's genocide in Gaza. The Starmer government's decision is a prime example of this: maintaining a facade of a rule-based system, while blatantly disregarding the most fundamental principles of international law. If ever there was an example of "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must", as Carney quoted from Thucydides, it is Israel's actions in Palestine, and it has carried them out with the full support of the supposed champions of the rule-based international order, notably Keir Starmer and his government.

Returning to the central matter of this report, the UK arms export system, the case of Gaza has reinforced a picture that was already becoming increasingly clear from the UK's arms sales to Saudi Arabia during the war in Yemen – that the export control system, supposedly designed to prevent UK military equipment from being used to violate human rights and commit war crimes, is broken beyond repair, or indeed fundamentally rigged. The government has literally shown that it will ignore its own criteria when they are inconvenient for the arms industry, and for military-industrial relations with the USA.

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.

UK Arms Exports in 2024 – Addendum

26th March 2026

CAAT's annual report on UK arms exports in 2024 reported that the regular statistics from UK Defence and Security Exports (UKDSE) on the value of arms export contracts secured by UK companies had not been published. Based on an FOI response from the Department of Business and Trade, in which UKDSE sits, we had concluded that the data had been discontinued.

However, in fact the annual UK Defence Exports Data for 2024 has now been published, but by the Ministry of Defence instead of UKDSE, although the latter conducted the survey of companies that is the source for the data.

This brief addendum to the CAAT report for 2024 summarises the key findings of this data release, and compares it with other sources of information on UK arms exports discussed in the annual report.

The value of UK arms export contracts recorded by the survey in 2024 was **£13.2 billion**, an increase of 10.9% over the figure for 2023 in nominal terms, or 8.1% in real terms. However, the 5-year average remained almost constant at **£10.1 billion**, and the total for 2020-2024, of £46.5 billion, is actually 15% *lower* in real terms than the corresponding total for 2015-19, (which was £46.2 billion, almost identical in current prices).

It should be noted that the figures for 2022 and 2023 from previous editions of the data (and reported in previous CAAT annual reports) have been revised downwards substantially, by 15% and 18% respectively, due to double counting and other errors, according to the new data release. Thus, the previously reported figure for 2023 of £14.5 billion, a record, has been revised to £11.9 billion, and the 2022 figure of £9.7 billion down to £8.5 billion. This is more than a minor revision, and represents serious errors in methodology in previous years. It can only be hoped that the current figures are more accurate.

The revisions rather changes the picture previously reported in e.g. CAAT's 2023 annual report, which suggested a generally rising trend in this measure of UK arms exports. While there is a clear increase in 2024, the long-term trend (see figure 5) shows that the 5-year average peaked around 2015-19 at around £11.8b a year in 2024 prices, about 50% higher than the trough of 2001-2005, but has subsequently fallen, and is now roughly at the same level in real terms as the period 1995-1999, during the brief post-Cold War "peace dividend". However, there has been a clear increase over the past 3 years, and the provisional figure of "over £20 billion" released by the MOD in December suggests this is continuing.

Regional distribution

The UK Defence Export Statistics do not break the figures down by recipient country, but they do by region: Africa, Asia & Pacific, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America (US & Canada), and "Mixed or unknown", where companies have provided aggregated figures not broken down by region, or including contracts to customers in multiple regions.

For the first time, a clear majority, 54% or £7.1 billion of the contracts were to recipients in Europe. This is 59% higher than the figure for 2023, and *five times* higher than the £1.4b sold to Europe in 2022. This is the result of massive European rearmament since the outbreak of the Ukraine war, which is still accelerating. The figures presumably do not even include a large proportion of UK arms supplies to Ukraine, as much of these supplies were donations by the MOD rather than

contracts won by UK companies, although it would include supplies of new arms paid for by the UK government but produced and sold by UK arms companies.

The Middle East, traditionally the largest recipient region, accounted for 24.8% of the sales, or £3.3b, while £1.7 billion, or 12.9%, went to North America. Over the longer period of 2015-2024, however (see figure 6), the Middle East remained the largest customer for UK arms sales, at 42.6%, followed by Europe (24.6%), North America (16.5%), and Mixed/Unknown (9.5%). Just 6% went to Asia & the Pacific, and less than 1% to Africa and Latin America combined.

Contracts vs licences

In previous reports, CAAT has estimated, based on a long-term comparison of the value of arms export contracts with the value of Single Individual Export Licences reported in government export licensing statistics (see the main 2024 annual report), that roughly half of UK arms exports are conducted using 'open' licences, which allow unlimited deliveries and do not have a financial value attached. This is based on the fact that, over a long period (say 10 years), the value of contracts has tended to be roughly double – sometimes more, sometimes less – the value of single licences. The figures for contracts are higher because they include sales regardless of what type of licence might eventually be used to export the goods.

Based on the new figures, with the major downward revision for 2022-23, it may be appropriate to revise this estimate. Over the period 2015-24, the value of contracts was roughly 65% higher than the value of single licences. This is not a like-for-like comparison, in that some export licences issued during the period will be for contracts signed before 2015, while some contracts signed during 2015-24 will not have export licences issued till after 2024. However, by measuring over a 10-year period it allows at least a reasonable estimate of the relationship between the two measures. Based on this, we may now estimate that, currently and in recent years, **roughly 40% of UK arms exports are conducted using open licences.**

Figure 5: UK arms export contracts 1999-2024

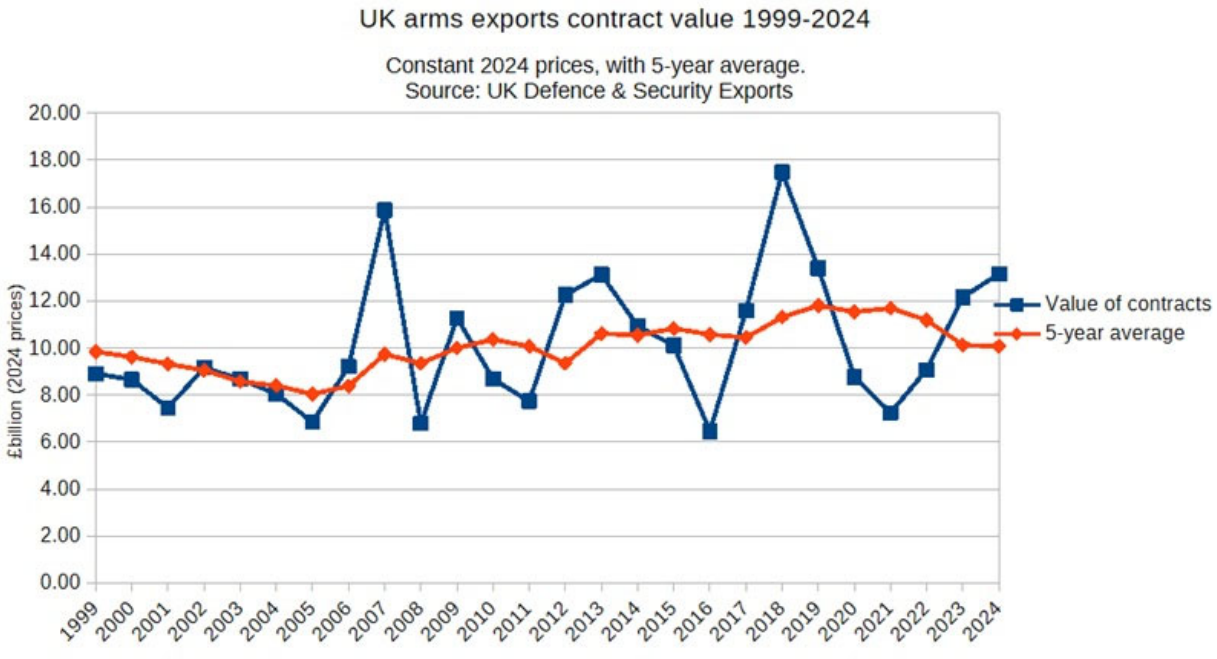
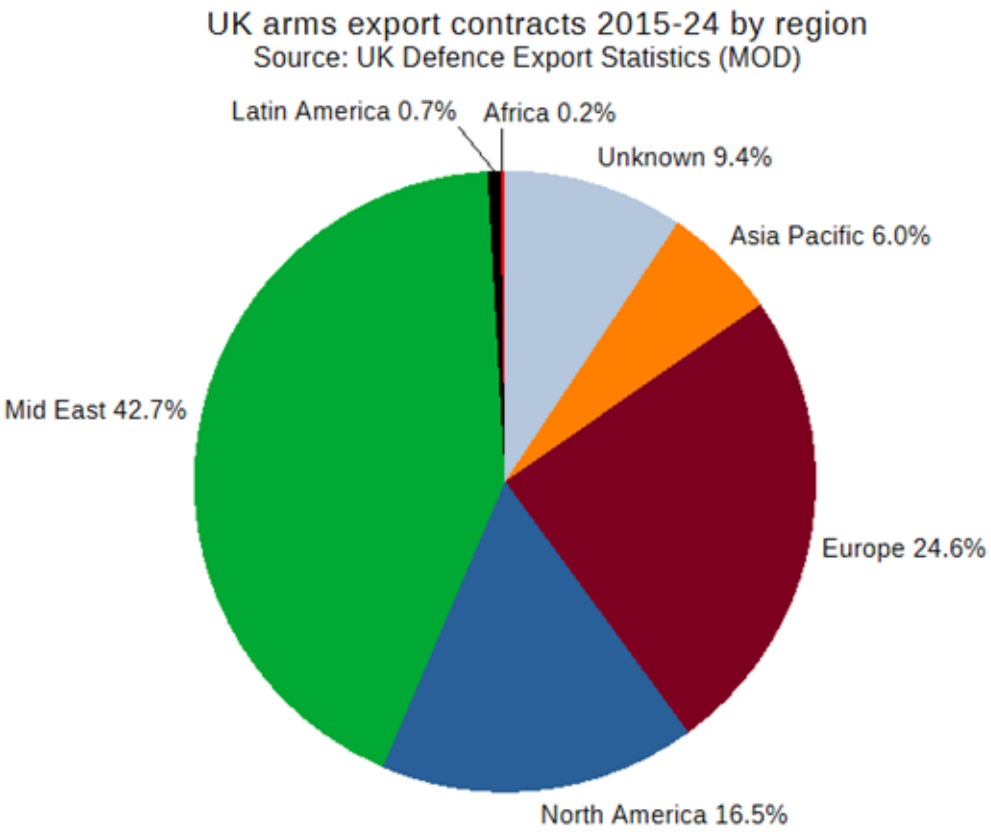


Figure 6: UK arms export contracts by region 2015-24



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