CAMPAIGN AGAINST ARMS TRADE

Entangled

Mapping the UK-US arms trade and their intertwined arms industries, and the dangerous dependencies, warmongering and complicity that result



Sam Perlo-Freeman

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About the author

Dr. Sam Perlo-Freeman is Research Coordinator at Campaign Against Arms Trade.

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

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

Tel 020 7281 0297 **Email** enquiries@caat.org.uk **Web** caat.org.uk **Twitter/X** @CAATuk

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Executive Summary

The United States of America has long been the UK's closest political and military ally. Since the end of the Cold War, The UK has joined in numerous US-led wars, and has rarely engaged in armed conflict except in coalition with the US. The US retains a significant military presence in the UK. However, the increasingly erratic behaviour of the Trump administration, signs of reduced US commitment to NATO, and even threats to annex territory of NATO allies, have led to increased questioning of the wisdom of excessive dependence on the US for security.

The UK-US military and political alliance is reflected in a major two-way arms trading relationship, and by a deep interweaving of the two countries' arms industries. While the UK produces a large proportion of its military equipment domestically, it buys significant quantities of major conventional arms from the US, notably the F-35 combat aircraft, the Apache attack helicopter, and much more. The US is by far the UK's largest foreign arms supplier. Perhaps the most significant UK arms import from the US is the Trident nuclear missiles, which are leased from a US-owned pool. This makes the UK's so-called 'independent nuclear deterrent' in fact highly dependent on the US. The UK's nuclear warheads are also based on US design and technology.

The UK is also the US's leading foreign arms supplier, and the US is one of the top UK arms customers. Since the US produces the vast majority of its own arms, this does not create a similar dependence on UK military technology, but UK arms companies play a significant role in the supply chains of many US weapons programmes, most notably the F-35 stealth combat aircraft.

Beyond the exchange of arms and military components and technology, there is a strong defence industrial relationship – most of the top UK arms companies have major subsidiaries in the US, and many top and mid-level US arms companies likewise have significant UK subsidiaries.

This report maps the UK-US military industrial relationship, including arms sales in both directions, the intertwining of the two countries' arms industries, and the role of UK companies in key US supply chains. It concludes with recommendations for ending UK complicity in the worst excesses of US militarism, and reducing UK military industrial dependence on the US in the long term.

UK arms sales to the US

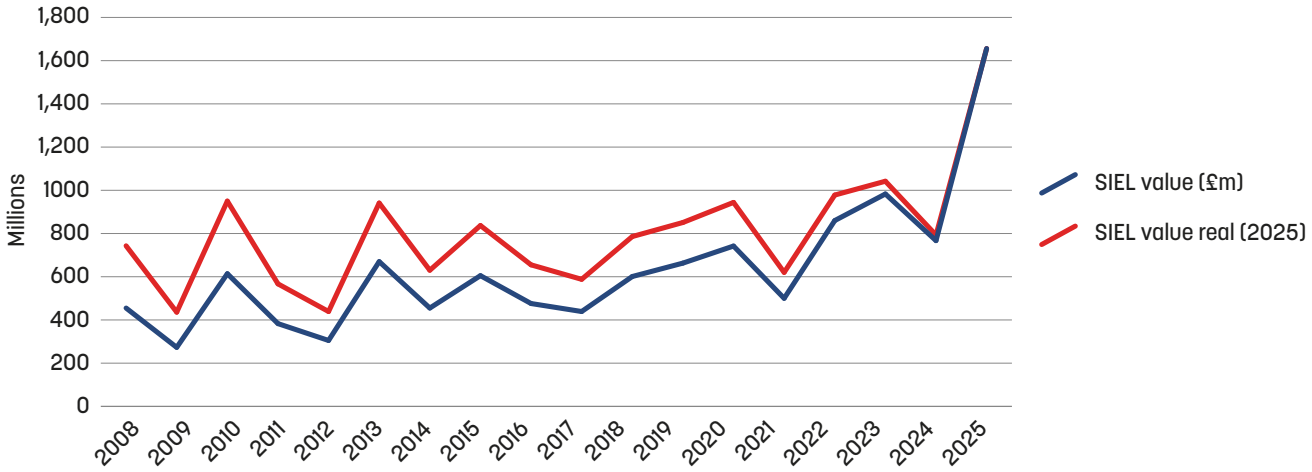
Over the past ten years, 2016–2025, the total value of Single Individual Export Licences (SIELs) issued for export of military equipment to the US, was £7,696 million. This represents 13.8% of the value of all SIELs issued during the period, making the US the second largest recipient, after Saudi Arabia with £9.2 billion.

In addition, 434 Open Individual Export Licences (OIELs) were issued to the US in this period, generally valid for either 3 or 5 years, and allowing for unlimited deliveries. This is the highest number of OIELs for any country during this period.

Moreover, there are numerous Open General Export Licences (OGELs) for which the US is a permitted destination; these are pre-issued, open-ended licences for which companies can register, thereafter allowing ongoing exports without the need for further licensing. Most notable is the OGEL for the US-UK Defence Trade Cooperation Treaty, which was signed in 2007 to ease arms transfers between the US and the UK. This OGEL allows the export of most types of military equipment, with some key exceptions, so long as they are ultimately for use by the US government.

Value of single export licences to US 2008–2025

£m, current and constant 2025 prices



Taken together with other data, the US is probably the UK's second biggest arms customer over the long term.

A significant proportion of the SIELs issued to the US are for "incorporation" – that is, components sold to US arms companies to be incorporated into larger systems and then re-exported to other countries. Of the £7.7 billion worth of licences issued during 2016–25, £4.3b were "direct", i.e. only for use by the United States, while £3.4 billion were for incorporation. The types of equipment licenced to the US by SIELs differs between direct and incorporation licences. For direct licences, by far the largest category of equipment licenced is ML1, covering small arms and their components and accessories, at £1.9 billion. For incorporation licences, the largest category is ML10 (aircraft and components), £1.2b, then ML4 (bombs, missiles, grenades etc., components, and countermeasures) at £859m.

UK Defence Export Statistics

According to the most recent UK Defence Export Statistics published by the MOD, the total value of arms export contracts gained by UK companies from 2015–24 was **£92.4 billion**, of which **£15.2 billion** was to North America (the US and Canada). The vast majority of this is likely to be for the US. An additional £8.7b was to "mixed or unknown", some of which was likely to the US. While the ultimate level of actual exports is uncertain, it does suggest that total exports are a lot higher, quite possibly twice as high, as the value of SIELs alone, with as much of half of UK arms exports to the US going through open licences.

SIPRI data on major conventional weapons transfers

SIPRI's Arms Transfers Database covers major weapons systems and platforms, such as aircraft, warships, tanks and armoured vehicles, artillery, missiles, and air defence systems, but also certain major subsystems, such as radars and sonars, engines for military aircraft, warships and tanks, and air refuelling systems.

According to SIPRI's "Trend Indicator Value" measure, 15% of UK major conventional weapons exports over the period 2001–25 were to the US, making the US the second-largest recipient, while 21.4% of US imports were from the UK, making the UK the US's leading foreign supplier by this measure.

The majority of UK major conventional weapons exports to the US in this period have been major subsystems, such as aircraft and naval engines, radar systems, and air-to-air refuelling systems. However there have also been some exports of artillery.

UK arms imports from the US

US arms export are conducted by two principle routes: Foreign Military Sales (FMS), which are government-to-government agreements between the US and the recipient country, and Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), which are agreed between the exporting company and the recipient country. The UK's acquisition of F-35 combat aircraft seems to go by its own separate mechanism, reflecting the UK's status as a lead partner in the F-35 programme.

- **The total value of FMS contracts for US arms sales to the UK between 2015–2024 was $14.0 billion (£10.1b).**
- **The total value of DCS *deliveries* to the UK of military goods from 2015–2024 (US fiscal years) was $1.6 billion.**
- **The MOD paid a total of £10.0 billion to the US government over the period 2018/19–2024/25.** This presumably includes both FMS and F-35 purchases, but not DCS.
- **SIPRI data show that over the period 2001–25, the US supplied 74.2% of UK imports of major conventional weapons. The figure for 2021–25 was 85.3%.**

UK imports of major conventional weapons to US

SIPRI Arms Transfers Database

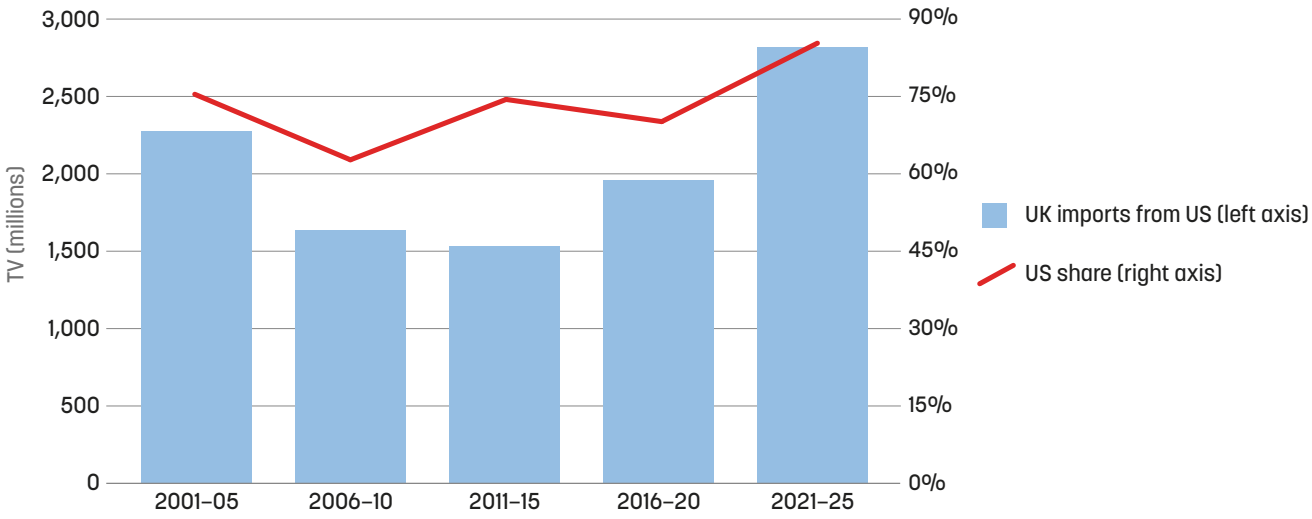


Table 1: UK orders of major conventional weapons from the US recorded by SIPRI 2001–2025

Order year(s)	Description	Delivered by
Aircraft		
2002, 2007, 2012	11 light transport aircraft (King Air)	2013
2006–2012	4 heavy transport aircraft (C-17)	2012
2006	126 F-35B combat aircraft (48 definite orders)	38 by 2025
2025	12 F-35A combat aircraft	---
2016	9 P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine aircraft	2022
2022	13 L-159A ALCA 2nd hand fighter/ground attack aircraft	2024
2006–2021	28 armed drones (12 MQ-9 Reapers, 16 Protectors)	2025
2016	50 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters	2025
2011	16 CH-47F Chinook transport helicopters	2015
2021	14 MH-47G Chinook transport helicopters	---
2002	6 Bell-412 trainer/SAR helicopters	2003
2007, 2010, 2012	6 King Air ISR ground surveillance aircraft	2013
2008	4 King Air MP maritime patrol aircraft	2011
2019	3 Boeing-737 Airborne Early Warning & Control aircraft	---
2010	3 RC-135 Rivet Joint signals intelligence aircraft	2017
2016, 2019	14 T-6 Texan 2 armed trainer aircraft	2020
Land equipment		
2001–2011	667 Cougar MRAP armoured vehicles	2011
2009–2010	333 MXT-MV APCs	2011
2021	6 M-270 MLRS multiple rocket launchers	2 by 2025
Missiles and bombs (numbers are estimates)		
2001–2015	6,300 Paveway IV guided bombs (Produced in UK, recorded by SIPRI as licenced production)	2017
2003–2022	6.970 FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank missiles	6,370 by 2025
2018	50 Mk-54 LWT anti-submarine torpedoes	2022
2005, 2023	2,844 + unknown no. GMLRS guided rockets	2,844 by 2012
Missiles and bombs (numbers are estimates)		
2006	40 AGM-65 Maverick air-to-surface missiles	2007
2012–2017	2,600 AGM-114 Hellfire-2 anti-tank/air-to-surface missiles	2017
2023	768 WGU-59 APKWS air-to-surface missiles	763 by 2025
2004–2014	110 BGM-109 Tomahawk surface-to-surface missiles	2016
2004, 2006, 2022	562 AIM-120D AMRAAM long-range air-to-air missiles	362 by 2008
2001	336 Stinger portable surface-to-air missiles	2004
Naval weapons		
2017, 2023	13 Mk-41 VLS naval surface-to-air missiles systems	---
2006, 2012	22 Phalanx naval guns	2017
2016	3 Mk-45-4 127mm naval guns	---
Sensors		
2007	10 AAQ-33 Sniper ATP aircraft electro-optical systems	2007
2006	2 APY-8 Lynx ground-surveillance radars (for UAVs)	2007

The transatlantic military-industrial complex

The large-scale exchange of arms between the US and the UK is reflected in their respective arms industries, the result of transatlantic mergers and acquisitions, and sometimes US companies creating new facilities in the UK to support contracts with the MOD.

Most major UK-headquartered arms companies have substantial US-based operations, ranging from a significant minority (e.g. Rolls-Royce and QinetiQ) in the 10–15% range, to around 40% for BAE and possibly a majority for Melrose, with Babcock the only major exception. The US market is thus absolutely crucial for the UK arms industry, both as an export customer and as a secondary base of operations and source of profits. In contrast, UK-based subsidiaries of major US arms companies represent a much smaller share of these companies' overall business than vice versa, and are generally smaller in absolute terms as well than the biggest UK subsidiaries in the US.

The extent of UK arms companies' operations in the US, and the often substantial proportion of their overall revenues derived from these businesses, underlines another dimension of the UK's military-industrial dependence on the US.

Table 2: UK arms companies in the US

Company	Total 2025 revenue (£m)	Total employees	% revenue from US	% employees in US	Other info
BAE Systems	30,700	111,400	43% to US customers ~40% from US business	32%	
Rolls-Royce	21,200	42,800	27.4% to US customers	12.4%	
QinetiQ	1,923 (2025–26)	7,378 (Mar 2026)	15% (to US customers, from US business)	Not known	
Melrose Industries	3,589	13,844	65% (North American customers)	Not known	28% of segment assets in US. 33% of open roles in US (Sep 2026)
Serco	4,877	50,000	30% (North American customers)	~20%	63% of defence revenue from N.A. customers
Babcock	5,178 (2025–26)	29,000	5% (US customers)	Not known	Most US sales seem to be from UK
Chemring	497.5	2,802	33% (US customers)	Not known	30% of non-current assets in US

Table 3 – US arms companies with UK subsidiaries

Company	UK revenue (year)	UK employees	Payment by MOD (2024/25)
Boeing Defence UK	£571m (2024)	2,100	£512m
General Dynamics UK	£348m	1,026	£288m
Lockheed Martin UK	£523m (2024) inc. 50% stake in Ascent Flight Training	1,705 (not inc. Ascent)	£378m (inc. 50% Ascent stake)
RTX (Raytheon Systems UK, Collins Aerospace UK, Pratt & Whitney UK)	~£2,400m (2025, reporting unclear. Large proportion of Collins is civil)	~6,000	£137m
Leidos Europe	£489.5m (2025)	1,263	£656m
L3 Harris	>£184.4m (2024, reporting unclear)	~1,000	£82m (parent company total - £50m to identified UK subsidiaries)
Northrop Grumman	£199.3m (2024)	776	£84m
Honeywell International	Unclear	1,758 (2025)	<£5m
Teledyne Technologies	£298m (2024)	1,460	<£5m

The UK role in key US arms supply chains

The UK has been involved in the US F-35 5th generation stealth combat aircraft almost from the beginning. As such, the UK arms industry was afforded a major role in producing the F-35, with around 15% of each plane by value produced in the UK, and over 100 UK companies involved. The F-35 programme has resulted in £22 billion worth of contracts for UK companies, compared to £11b spent by the UK government on procuring and supporting the aircraft.[1] BAE Systems' UK business made £885m from the F-35 programme in 2025.

So important does the government regard the F-35 programme to UK defence and industry, that it created a specific 'carve-out' for the F-35 from a partial suspension of arms export licences to Israel in 2024, despite admitting that there was a clear risk that components for F-35 aircraft supplied to Israel might be used to commit serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Gaza.

According to Freedom of Information responses, 73 UK companies are registered for the Open General Export Licence covering the F-35 programme. F-35 components and subsystems made in the UK include the rear fuselage, the active control system, targeting lasers, bomb release cables, the "active lift" system enabling short-take-off and vertical-landing (STOVL) for the F-35B, air refuelling systems for the F-35B and C, ejector seats, and a wide range of other structural and electronic components.

Other major US weapons systems with significant UK components include the F-16 and F-22 combat aircraft, the C-130J transport aircraft, and various air tanker refuelling aircraft.

Conclusions

The UK and the USA have an extensive two-way arms trade relationship, reflecting their status as close military allies, and strengthened by specific treaty arrangements and a deep intertwining of their respective arms industries.

The UK is heavily dependent on US arms supplies in several key areas, including Trident nuclear missiles, F-35 combat aircraft, and a range of other military fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. While many of these could in theory be replaced by domestically-produced alternatives, this would likely be a decades-long enterprise. The UK arms industry is also highly dependent on the US as a major customer. The US is much less dependent on UK arms supplies, although the UK is the US's largest foreign arms supplier, and is involved in many major US arms programmes.

This dependence carries numerous negative consequences. The nuclear dependence in particular umbilically links UK foreign policy to that of the US, likely a major reason why the UK has been a willing and eager participant in numerous destructive US wars of choice, such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq. Similarly, the UK is closely tied to the US in its support for Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinians. The F-35 'carve-out', making the UK deeply complicit in Israel's genocide in Gaza, is largely the result of this dependence. As the US under President Trump becomes more erratic and dangerous in its international policies, these issues become starker.

Recommendations

- The UK's export licence criteria should be rigorously enforced with respect to the US, without special exemptions or manipulation of criteria to allow permissive interpretations. When the US launches wars of aggression such as against Iran, the UK should ensure that UK equipment that is likely to be used in them is not supplied.
- The UK's unprecedented F-35 carve out allowing for the continued export of components to Israel should be ended, and no similar arrangements, involving an outsourcing of export licence decisions to the US, should be entered into in future.
- No export licence should be issued to the US for which Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is an end-user.
- Especial caution should be exported regarding the licensing of small arms exports for US commercial users, given the widespread diversion of such weapons to criminal cartels in Mexico and Central America.
- Nuclear weapons are immoral, unusable, extremely expensive, and create huge dependence on the US. The UK should abandon nuclear weapons and join the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
- The UK should undertake a radical realignment of the UK's security priorities to puts human security at its heart, placing proper emphasis on the climate crisis. This would mean a major reassessment of what military capabilities the UK actually needs.
- The UK should in particular abandon its delusions of being a global military power, refocusing capabilities on those needed for domestic and European defence, as opposed to expeditionary wars around the world.
- In the longer term, the UK should seek to replace US-purchased systems, where possible, and when such systems are still considered necessary, with those produced domestically, or purchased from or produced in partnership with partners that are less implicated in global warmongering and aggression. Domestic preference should not mean a blank check for the grossly wasteful and overly influential UK arms industry.

1 Introduction: The "Special Relationship" and its discontents

The United States of America has long been the UK's closest political and military ally, and successive British leaders have oft touted the "special relationship" between the two countries (even if this has not always been quite as enthusiastically reciprocated on the US side). Since the end of the Cold War, the UK has fought alongside the US in most of the latter's wars, and likewise the UK has rarely engaged in armed conflict except as part of a coalition with the US (the 1999 intervention in Sierra Leone being a rare exception). The US retains a significant military presence in the UK, despite the closure of numerous US bases since the end of the Cold War. The US and the UK of course remain leading members of the NATO alliance.

While UK involvement in specific US wars, most notably Iraq, have often drawn substantial opposition, in that case even from mainstream politicians and commentators, and likewise there are many in the mainstream who would agree that the UK should not always follow US foreign policy so closely, the idea that the UK-US alliance itself might ever come into question, or that the UK should halt its arms trade with the US would have been considered a highly fringe position, at least until very recently. Now, however, the erratic and lawless behaviour of the Trump administration has raised serious alarms among policy-makers in the UK and Europe. Major concerns include the illegal and (so far) disastrous war on Iran, along with strong signs from Trump of a reduced commitment to NATO, and a failure to support Ukraine's defene against Russia. This has forced policy-makers to contemplate a possible future in which the US might no longer be committed to Europe's defence, and where even the normally-loyal UK might have to break more strongly from US foreign policy. Notably, the UK has not directly joined in the US-Israeli war on Iran, although they have allowed the US to use UK military bases for attacks (supposedly only those of a 'defensive' nature). Similarly, many European countries are starting to consider how they might be less dependent on the US for arms supplies, although such thinking seems less advanced in the UK.

It would be a monumental exaggeration to suggest that mainstream politicians might consider an end to the US-UK alliance or arms trade in the forseeable future, and indeed many of the responses in the UK and Europe to Trump's words and actions have been to seek to encourage continued US commitment, for example by promising massive increases in military spending. But it seems at least possible, without being promptly laughed out of the room, to ask the question as to whether the UK should be less closely tied to the US militarily, less dependent on their arms supplies, and indeed whether the

UK should continue to support the US's illegal, dangerous and ill-considered military adventures through arms supplies (even if the UK willingly took part in most of them until recently).

The UK-US military and political alliance is reflected in a major two-way arms trading relationship, and by a deep interweaving of the two countries' arms industries. This briefing details the nature and extent of this interwoven military-industrial relationship, illustrating in so doing the deep-seated ties that would need to be unpicked to lessen UK military dependence on the US.

While the UK produces a large proportion of its military equipment domestically, it buys significant quantities of major conventional arms from the US, notably the F-35 combat aircraft, the Apache attack helicopter, and much more. The US is by far the UK's largest foreign arms supplier. But perhaps the most politically (if not militarily) significant UK arms import from the US is the Trident nuclear missiles that arm the UK's Vanguard class ballistic missile submarines, and are expected to arm the successor Dreadnought class submarines currently under construction. These Trident missiles are not bought from the US, but rather leased from a US-owned pool, to which they are periodically returned for maintenance, to be replaced by others from the pool. This makes the UK's so-called 'independent nuclear deterrent' in fact highly dependent on the US's willingness to continue this arrangement. This dependence is further reinforced by the fact that the UK's nuclear warheads, produced at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston, are based on US design and technology, with the fire control systems, navigation subsystems, and warhead aeroshells coming from US companies.[2]



Poster promoting the 1898 United States and Great Britain Industrial Exposition.
Source: Donaldson Litho Co / Wikimedia Commons

> **The UK-US military and political alliance is reflected in a major two-way arms trading relationship, and by a deep interweaving of the two countries' arms industries**

In the other direction, the UK is the US's leading foreign arms supplier, and likewise the US is consistently one of the top, and sometimes the number one, arms customer for the UK, whether measured by export licence data, SIPRI data on major conventional weapons transfers, or other sources of data. Given that the US produces the vast majority of its own arms, this does not create anything like a similar dependence on UK military technology, but UK arms companies play a significant role in the supply chains of many major US weapons programmes, perhaps most notably the F-35 stealth combat aircraft.

US-UK military industrial cooperation has been deepened by the 2007 US-UK Defence Trade Cooperation Treaty, which eases export licensing between the two countries, and more recently by the AUKUS agreement between Australia, the UK and the US, which as well as involving the US and the UK supplying Australia with nuclear-powered

2 See e.g. **https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/2026/08/07/the-three-myths-that-drive-the-uks-nuclear-juggernaut/**. For more information on the deep UK dependence on the US for its nuclear weapons systems, see Nuclear Information Service, "US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement", October 2024, **https://www.nuclearinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/MDA-Briefing-2nd-edition-digital.pdf**

attack submarines, involves several areas of cooperation between the three countries in advanced military technologies, including autonomous underwater systems, quantum technologies, AI, cyber warfare, hypersonic weapons and counter-hypersonic capabilities, and electronic warfare.[3]

> **The UK is the US's leading foreign arms supplier, and likewise the US is consistently one of the top, and sometimes the number one, arms customer for the UK**

Beyond the exchange of arms and military components and technology, there is a strong defence industrial relationship – most of the top UK arms companies have major subsidiaries in the US, and many top and mid-level US arms companies likewise have significant UK subsidiaries.

CAAT's position is clear, that the UK should not be supplying arms to countries engaged in armed aggression against other nations as the US is, allies or not, and that our involvement in US programmes like the F-35 make us complicit in Israel's genocide in Gaza. Equally, with the US engaged in an ongoing spree of extrajudicial executions in the Caribbean, involving air strikes on boats suspected of carrying drugs, this is another reason why arms sales to the US that might contribute to such murders should be stopped. However, the main purpose of this briefing is to map out the extent and nature of the interlinkages of the UK-US arms trade, in both directions, in order to build a comprehensive picture of the industrial dimension of a military alliance that an increasing range of voices are now openly questioning.

Section 2 presents overall data, from a variety of sources, on UK arms exports to the US, and also the limitations of this data, and what it fails to tell us. Section 3 discusses UK arms imports from the US, again discussing the overall data, as well as specific major arms acquisition programs by the MOD from the US, such as the F-35. Section 4 discusses the relationship between the two arms industries, including information on UK arms companies with significant US subsidiaries, and vice versa, and what this means for the defence industrial relationship between the two countries. Section 5 goes into more detail on UK exports to the US, setting out the role of the UK arms industry in the supply chain of many key US weapons systems. Finally, section 6 presents conclusions and initial thoughts on how the UK might disentangle itself from this transatlantic military industrial complex, reduce UK dependence on US arms, and end UK complicity in the worst aspects of US militarism.

> **CAAT's position is clear, that the UK should not be supplying arms to countries engaged in armed aggression against other nations as the US is, allies or not, and that our involvement in US programmes like the F-35 make us complicit in Israel's genocide in Gaza**

3 https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47599

2 UK arms sales to the US

Though there are a number of limitations to the available data over UK arms sales to the US, as for UK arms exports in general, this section draws on a range of sources to illustrate the scale of business being conducted and the resultant reliance on the US market for UK arms companies across a broad range of types of military equipment.

The key sources of data covered in this section are: a) export licence data published by the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU), which is responsible for export licensing decisions; b) The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)'s Arms Transfers Database (ADTB), covering orders and deliveries of major conventional weapons, and c) – largely as an overall numerical cross-check – UK Defence Export Statistics published formerly by UK Defence & Security Exports (UKDSE, a government arms export promotion unit), and latterly by the MOD, on the value of arms export contracts won by UK companies each year.

For more information on these sources, and their limitations, see CAAT's annual reports on UK arms exports, most recently for 2024. Export licensing data is the most detailed, but provides only a partial picture of the value of exports, due to the high prevalence of non-transparent "open" licences, which allow for unlimited deliveries of specified equipment during the term of the licence. As actual deliveries are not reported, exports using these licences are simply not measured. SIPRI data looks at actual deliveries as well as orders, and gives information on specific systems, but it only covers what SIPRI classifies as "major conventional weapons", thus excluding most components and subsystems, small arms and light weapons, and military services. Finally, the Defence Export Statistics, measuring the value of orders, are more comprehensive than the export licensing data, as it includes export contracts regardless of the type of licence that might eventually be used to deliver them, but it has almost no detail, including even by destination country. Thus, there is not even a specific figure for the US, but as there is a figure for "North America" – the US and Canada – this allows for a reasonably good estimate of exports to the US specifically, with only a very small proportion going to Canada.

Export licensing data

Over the past ten years, 2016–2025, the total value of Single Individual Export Licences (SIELs) issued for export of military equipment to the US, was £7,696 million. This represents 13.8% of the value of all SIELs issued during the period, making the US the second largest recipient, after Saudi Arabia with £9.2 billion.

However, while this clearly shows the US as one of the largest recipients of UK arms exports, this is only part of the story, as there have also been a large number of open licences issued in this period. This includes 434 Open Individual Export Licences (OIELs) issued to the US, generally valid for either 3 or 5 years, and allowing for unlimited deliveries.[4] This is the highest number of OIELs for any country during this period. It is notable that, while countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar are first and third respectively in the list of SIEL recipients by value, they are much further down the list of OIELs (receiving 142 and 121 respectively, 27th and 33rd place); the top OIEL recipients are mostly NATO and other close allies such as Australia, regarded as "safe" destinations.

> **Taken together, with other data, the US is probably the UK's second biggest arms customer over the long term**

Moreover, there are numerous Open General Export Licences (OGELs) for which the US (and again, most or all other EU and NATO countries) is a permitted destination; these are pre-issued, open-ended licences for which companies can register, thereafter allowing the export of often a very wide range of equipment to the permitted destinations without the need for further individual licensing. Most notable is the OGEL in support of the US-UK Defence Trade Cooperation Treaty,[5] which was signed in 2007, intending to ease arms transfers between the US and the UK for an "approved community" of companies on both sides, without the need for individual export licensing. This OGEL allows the export of most types of military equipment, with some key exceptions such as missiles, UAVs and their components, and certain sensitive technologies, so long as they are ultimately for use by the US government.

Taken together, with other data, the US is probably the UK's second biggest arms customer over the long term, after Saudi Arabia, for which there are also important OGELs covering the Eurofighter Typhoon and Tornado aircraft among other projects. However, while the UK's arms trade with Saudi Arabia involves mega contracts for major weapons systems – the above-mentioned aircraft, along with the missiles and bombs that arm them, Hawk trainers, and the ongoing support and maintenance of the Saudi air force, as we shall see, UK arms sales to the US mostly involve components or at most major subsystems such as engines and aerial refuelling systems, with UK industry playing a key role in the supply chains for many of the US's major arms programmes.

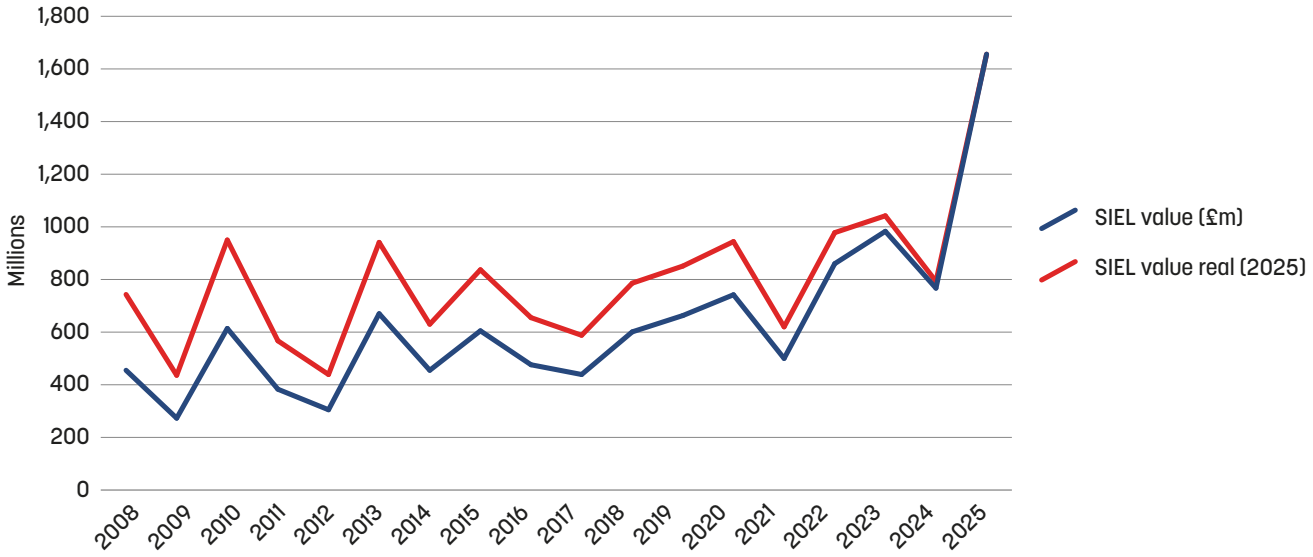
The value of SIELs to the US has fluctuated significantly from year to year (see figure 1), but after accounting for inflation, there has not been a clear upward or downward trend in the real value of these licences since 2008. However, there was a very large spike in the value of licences in 2025, to £1,656 million, almost 60% higher in real terms than the highest previous figure (in 2024). Whether this is the beginning of a sustained higher level of exports through SIELs is too early to say.

4 There were also 50 "trade control" licences, allowing UK companies and individuals to arrange the sale of military equipment to the US from a 3rd country, not going through the UK.

5 See **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-general-export-licence-export-under-the-us-uk-defence-trade-co-operation-treaty**

Figure 1 Value of single export licences to US 2008–2025

£m, current and constant 2025 prices



Given this key supply chain role, and the US's position as by far the world's leading arms exporter, it is not surprising that a significant proportion of the SIELs issued to the US are for "incorporation" – that is, components sold to US arms companies to be incorporated into larger systems and then re-exported to other countries, which must each by authorised by the UK licence. Of the £7.7 billion worth of licences issued during 2016–25, £4.3b were "direct", i.e. only for ultimate end-users in the United States, while £3.4 billion were for incorporation.

With OIELs, while some are specifically labelled as for incorporation (information that is not routinely disclosed in published export licensing information), it is likely that most OIELs can in practice be used in this way, as they often permit multiple destinations, sometimes as many as 60 or more. Thus, equipment or technology covered by the licence might be exported directly to any of the destinations, or to one of them (very often the US, as the largest producer of final systems), before being exported to another listed country as part of a larger system.

The types of equipment licenced to the US by SIELs differs between direct and incorporation licences. For direct licences, by far the largest category of equipment licenced is ML1, covering small arms and their components and accessories, at £1.9 billion. This is a clear majority of the value of all ML1 SIELs worldwide during the period, whether direct or for incorporation. It is not clear how much of this is for military use, for law enforcement, or for the US's very large (and frequently lethal) civilian firearms market. Next is ML10, covering aircraft and their components and related equipment, at £729 million, then ML4 (bombs, missiles, grenades etc., components a& countermeasures), £400m, ML11 (other electronic equipment), £393m, and ML14, military training equipment, £289m, with others far behind.

The most common item descriptions for direct licences were mostly small arms or aircraft related: sporting guns (562 licences, including both SIELs, OIELs and trade control licences), components for military support aircraft (384 licences), sporting shotguns (341), pistols (196), components for military aero engines (186), components for combat aircraft (169), components for military training aircraft (169), components for unmanned air vehicles (157), general military aircraft components (154), and components for military helicopters (145).

For incorporation licences, by contrast, there is very little in the ML1 category (£8.5m). The largest category is ML10, £1.2b, then ML4 at £859m, and again ML11, £417m, and ML14, £356m. Warships and their components, ML9, also figure highly at £143m, with ML5, which includes radars and sonars, and other target acquisition and weapons control systems and their components and countermeasures, at £132m.

The item descriptions covered were dominated by aircraft-related items: components for military aero engines (136), components for military support aircraft (125), components for combat aircraft (107), components for military training aircraft (94), components for combat helicopters (94), components for military helicopters (69), components for military radars (65), components for targeting equipment (52), military guidance/navigation equipment (51), and components for military guidance/navigation equipment (49).

Unfortunately, for many incorporation licences, it is not possible to know who are the ultimate end-users authorised for particular licences, especially in more recent data that is aggregated by the quarter, rather than older data that can be identified to the day (see CAAT annual report for 2024). However, responses to FOI requests have revealed a large number of licences where Israel was the final "incorporation destination" (some of which may subsequently have been suspended), including many that listed only Israel as an approved final end-user. Otherwise, from the partial information typically published on incorporation destinations, we can know that at least some of the goods regularly licenced for export to the US allow for re-export to a very large number of third countries around the world, probably including most of the US's arms customers.

Thus, when it comes to the UK role in US major weapons supply chains – including aircraft, warships, drones, and missiles – a large majority of the SIELs at any rate are ultimately for systems that will be re-exported to third countries. However, it is not possible to know the split with open licences, and we do know that the OGEL covering the US-UK defence trade treaty is *only* for direct exports ultimately for US end-users, and not for re-export (see above).

For OIELs, while financial values are not available, we can get some idea of the type of goods exported through the item descriptions most frequently listed in the licence details, and it is very heavily weighted towards aircraft. The top 5 items, and 8 of the top 10, are all in this category: the top 10 are components for military support aircraft, general military aircraft components, military aircraft ground equipment, components for military training aircraft, components for combat aircraft, military electronic equipment, components for military aero-engines, technology for military support aircraft, components for military helicopters, and technology for military electronic equipment. (Of course much of the military electronic equipment and technology for same may well also be for aircraft). This is unsurprising, as the UK arms industry is very heavily aerospace focused.

In many ways, the most surprising element is the high value of small arms related licences. While a recent deterioration in the detail provided in export licence data makes it difficult to say for sure, it would appear that a very high proportion of these exports are sporting guns, although there are also some very large licences for sniper rifles, some covering tens of thousands of guns (for small arms, uniquely, the number of complete units is reported in published licensing information). Previous information has shown that at least some of these sniper rifle licences are for commercial end users which, given the US's lax gun control laws and high levels of gun violence, not to mention the serious problem of smuggling of firearms from the US to Mexico and Central America for use by criminal organisations, raises serious concerns.

UK Defence Export Statistics

The most recent UK Defence Export Statistics, which includes data from 2013–2024, can be found in the MOD's most recent *Trade, Industry and Contracts* statistical publication for 2024–25. This provides the value of arms export contracts won by UK companies each year, broken down by region, and by "domain" (air, land, sea, and "mixed or unknown"). This shows a total value of contracts from 2015–24 of **£92.4 billion**, of which **£15.2 billion** was to North America (the US and Canada). An additional £8.7b was to "mixed or unknown", some of which was likely to the US. Since export licences to Canada are only just over 10% of the total value of SIELs to the US and Canada over the same period, it is likely that the vast majority of that £15.2b (plus however much of the unknown category) is to the US, around double the corresponding export licence value. While what this means for the ultimate level of actual exports is uncertain, it does suggest that total exports are a lot higher, quite possibly twice as high, as the value of SIELs alone, with as much of half of UK arms exports to the US going through open licences – this is consistent with what we know about the number of OIELs issued for the US, and the wide-ranging nature of applicable OGELs.

There are clear signs of an increase in the level of arms sales to the US in this data – the value of contracts increased from £6.2 billion in 2015–19, to £9.0 billion in 2016–20, a 46% increase. The value of contracts was consistently higher in the latter five years than the former.

SIPRI data on major conventional weapons transfers

SIPRI's Arms Transfers Database covers major weapons systems and platforms, such as aircraft, warships, tanks and armoured vehicles, artillery, missiles, and air defence systems, but also certain major subsystems, such as radars and sonars, engines for military aircraft, warships and tanks, and air refuelling systems. As well as a list of orders and deliveries between states, the database provides a numerical measure, SIPRI's own "Trend Indicator Value" (TIV). This is not a financial value, but attempts to provide an internationally comparable measure of the volume of transfers between states.[6] As the US rarely buys major weapons platforms from other countries, UK exports to the US covered by the ATDB typically cover subsystems. Much of these exports are produced under licence in the US, which means that only the technology and perhaps some components would actually be transferred from the UK.

The major conventional weapons exports recorded in the SIPRI database from 2001 to 2025 are (excluding second-hand equipment not originally UK-produced):

- 32 Rolls-Royce MT-30 gas turbine engines, ordered in 2004 and delivered 2008–25, for 16 US-built Littoral Combat Ships.
- 275 BAE Systems L-119 towed 105mm howitzers, ordered 2005, delivered 2006–13, produced under licence in the US
- 22 Leonardo Seaspray 7500E maritime patrol aircraft radars, ordered 2005, delivered 2008–2011, for modernization of 22 US Coast Guard HC-130H MP aircraft
- 6 Rolls-Royce MT-30 gas turbine engines, ordered 2007, 4 delivered so far from 2016–19, for 3 US-built Zumwalt-class destroyers
- 1 air refuelling system (prob. Cobham, now Mission Systems Wimborne), ordered 2005, delivered 2006, for modification of 1 company-owned Boeing-707 transport aircraft to K-707 tanker aircraft

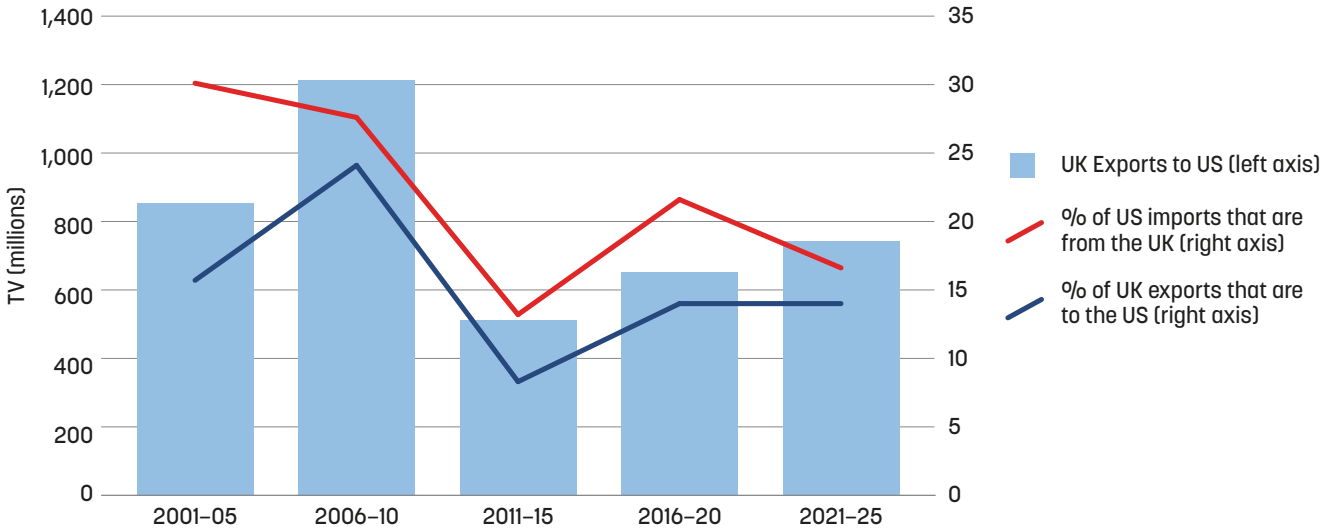
6 See SIPRI's Sources & Methods for more detail on the coverage of the database, and the TIV measure. **https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/sources-and-methods**

- 1 air refuelling system (prob. Cobham, now Mission Systems Wimborne), ordered 2006, delivered 2007, for modification of 1 company-owned DC-10 transport aircraft to KDC-10 tanker aircraft
- 179 Mission Systems Wimborne air refuelling systems, ordered 2011, 100 delivered so far 2019–2025, produced under licence in the US for 179 KC-46 tanker/transport aircraft produced in USA.
- 60 second-hand Rolls-Royce Pegaus-107 turbofan engines, ordered 2011, delivered 2012, as spares for US-built AV-8B combat aircraft
- 18 BAE Systems M-777 towed 155mm howitzers, ordered 2018, delivered 2021

In addition, second-hand equipment transferred included the 1-year lease of a transport ship, 642 originally US-produced air-to-surface missiles sold back to the US, and one US-produced C130-J transport aircraft, likewise sold back to the US.

While not as dramatic as combat aircraft or warships, these transfers add up to a significant volume using SIPRI's Trade Indicator Value measure. Figure 2 shows the total TIV value (in millions) of UK deliveries to the US, for each 5-year period during 2001–2025. By comparison, a single Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft has a TIV value of 55–57.5. Also shown, on the right-hand scale, is the share of total UK exports during each period that were to the US (the red line), and the share of total US imports that were from the UK (the yellow line). While the volume of exports has declined since 2001–2010, they have been creeping back up in recent years. **In total, 15% of UK major conventional weapons exports over the period 2001–25 were to the US, making the US the second-largest recipient, while 21.4% of US imports were from the UK, making the UK the US's leading foreign supplier by this measure.**

Figure 2 UK exports of major conventional weapons to US



This graph shows the level of UK major conventional arms transfers to the US from 2001–2025, based on SIPRI's TIV measure (see above). The light blue bars (left axis) show the total volume of transfers in each 5-year period. The dark blue line (right axis) shows the percentage of total UK exports that went to the US in each period (again according to the TIV measure). The red line (right axis) shows the proportion of total US imports that were from the UK in each period.

This section has provided a broad statistical overview of UK arms exports to the US, as well as some specific details on major conventional weapons. Section 5 will dig deeper into this, looking in more depth at the UK role in the supply chains of various major US weapons programmes, which requires looking beyond the above data sources.

3 UK arms imports from the US

While the UK procures the majority of its arms from its domestic arms industry, or from collaborative projects such as the Eurofighter in which the UK is an equal partner with other nations, it also imports significant quantities of arms from the US, including combat aircraft, transport aircraft, reconnaissance aircraft, attack helicopters, transport helicopters, drones, armoured vehicles, and a wide variety of missiles. The scale of these imports demonstrate the difficulty of extricating the UK from its current military dependence on the US.

There are various sources of data on UK arms imports from the US, on both the UK and the US side, as well as from SIPRI. However, as ever, these do not necessarily provide a complete picture.

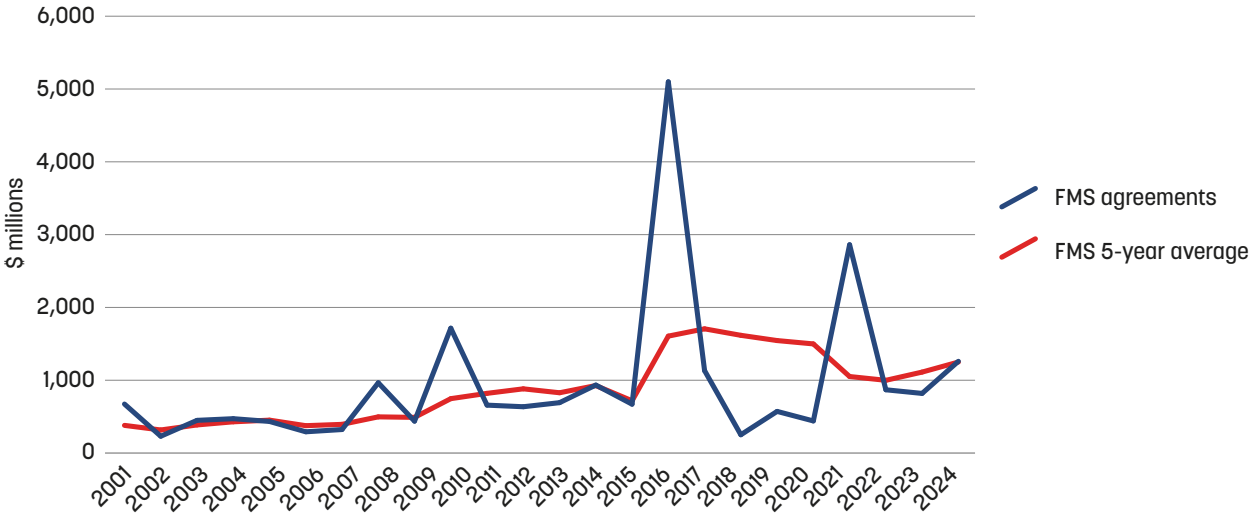
US arms export are conducted by two principle routes: Foreign Military Sales (FMS), which are government-to-government agreements between the US and the recipient country, which the US government then contracts to the US arms company producing the weapons; and Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), which are agreed between the exporting company and the recipient country, and require an export licence from the US Department of State. However, the UK's acquisition of F-35s seems to have its own distinct arrangement, where the UK is a partner nation rather than an FMS customer. It is not listed as an FMS project by the UK MOD, and does not appear to be included in US figures for FMS agreements.

For Foreign Military Sales, data from the US Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), part of the Department of Defense/War, gives a total value of $14.0 billion (£10.1b) for the total value of sales agreements signed with the UK between 2015–2024.[7] Figures for FMS deliveries are only available up to 2017. There is a clear sign of an uptick in the value of FMS imports by the UK in the past 10 years (figure 3), with a particular spike to just over $5 billion in 2016, when the UK ordered 8 P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine warfare aircraft for £3.4 billion, and 50 Apache AH-64E attack helicopters for $2.3 billion.[8] This does not appear to include the F-35s.

7 DSCA Historical Sales Books 2020–2024, Fiscal Years Series. US fiscal years run from October to September (so FY2024 is October 2023-September 2024)

8 SIPRI ATDB, **https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/uk-orders-new-apache-attack-helicopters/**

Figure 3 UK Foreign Military Sales agreements to UK 2001–2024



Data for Direct Commercial Sales exports by the US are of very poor quality. The State Department's annual Section 655 reports set out the value of export licences for each country in the previous year, broken down by category (a similar set of categories to the UK military list), and a total value for deliveries. However, the delivery figures exclude military services, while the licence figures frequently appear implausibly high – the average value for licences to the UK between 2015–24 is over $3 billion which, the time lag between licences and expenditure notwithstanding, cannot be explained by what we know of actual UK arms imports from US companies, outside of FMS agreements. Two possibilities present themselves: one, that companies applying for US export licences tend to greatly 'high-ball' their application values, to be certain of not exceeding them, thus leading to values that are usually far above actual usage of these licences; and two that the licences include authorisations for deliveries of equipment and services to US forces based in the UK (there has often appeared to be a correlation between countries hosting US forces, and extremely high licence values to such countries).

That said, the total value of DCS *deliveries* to the UK of military goods from 2015–2024 (US fiscal years) was $1.6 billion, again not including services. This actually appears to have diminished compared to previous years, perhaps partly due to an increasing use by the MOD of FMS agreements. This is reflected in the fact that the MOD has started producing figures for its spending each year on FMS deals, broken down by programme. Between 2018/19 and 2024/25, the MOD has spent £5.3 billion on FMS. The FMS spending includes £1.7 billion on the P-8A Poseidons, £1.2b on the Apaches, £1.1b on "Other projects", £659m on various uncrewed air systems, £400m on C-17 transport aircraft, and £209m on Chinook transport helicopters.

The MOD paid a total of £10.0 billion to the US government over the same period, 2018/19–2024/25, including sums paid to the US Treasury and the Department of Energy (the rest being labelled simply "US Government"). It is not clear what all of the additional £4.7 billion consists of, but it presumably includes spending on the F-35s. The UK government pays the US government's Joint Program Office (JPO) for development, production, and sustainment of the aircraft.[9] Since the JPOis not listed in the MOD's Trade Industry & Contracts data sets as a separate entity in the list of organisations receiving at least £5m each year from the MOD, these payments are presumably subsumed under total payments to the US Government. Payments to the US Department of Energy, which is responsible for the US's nuclear weapons programme, is likely related to support

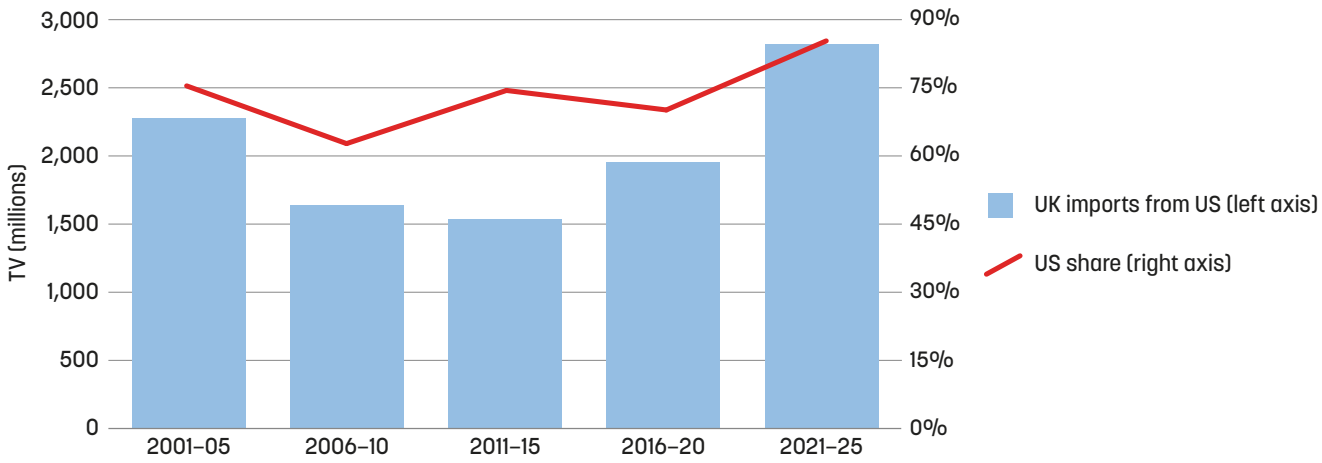
9 https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-uks-f-35-capability/

for the UK's development of nuclear warheads, at the Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment, based on US technology. Up to Match 2025, the MOD's Lightning Delivery Team, managing the F-35 procurement, had spent £9.35 billion, mostly paid to the JPO.[10]

Turning to SIPRI data on transfers of major conventional weapons, it is clear that the US is by far the UK's largest supplier, accounting for a large majority of UK imports (figure 4). Over the period 2001–2025, this figure never fell below 62.7%, and reached as high as 85.3% in 2021–2025. For the whole period, the figure is 74.2%. This data also reflects the upturn in UK imports from the US in recent years. The UK's other main foreign suppliers are European, as well as Israel and South Korea, which have grown in importance in the past decade. However, this somewhat understates the importance of other European countries in the supply chains of UK military equipment, especially for collaborative programs like the Eurofighter Typhoon, as for the most part these component and subsystems imports are not captured by SIPRI data. By contrast, the UK is only the 6th largest importer of US arms, accounting for 4.5% of total US exports over the period 2001–2025. Table 1 gives a full list of UK major conventional weapons orders from the US from 2001–2025, according to the SIPRI ATDB.

Figure 4 UK imports of major conventional weapons to US

SIPRI Arms Transfers Database



Such a significant level of dependence on the US in key areas is something that could not easily be ended except over a long period, perhaps multiple decades

Overall, despite the UK's status as a major arms producer, and a strong preference by successive governments for buying UK weapons systems where possible, a substantial proportion of the UK's major armaments come from the US. This is especially true of aircraft, where major combat aircraft are split between domestically produced Eurofighter Typhoons for conventional take-off and landing, and US F-35s for use with aircraft carriers, but where a large proportion of support aircraft (transport, reconnaissance, anti-submarine), helicopters, and UAVs are from the US; and also for missiles, often arming these air platforms. Land systems are mostly produced domestically, with US-produced Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) armoured vehicles the exception, and the UK produces almost all its warships and submarines domestically.

Such a significant level of dependence on the US in key areas is something that could not easily be ended except over a long period, perhaps multiple decades. Given the life

10 https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-uks-f-35-capability/

cycles of major programmes, and the need for sustainment – at any rate, not without losing substantial capabilities in the interim.

Table 1: UK orders of major conventional weapons from the US recorded by SIPRI 2001–2025

Order year(s)	Description	Delivered by
Aircraft		
2002, 2007, 2012	11 light transport aircraft (King Air)	2013
2006–2012	4 heavy transport aircraft (C-17)	2012
2006	126 F-35B combat aircraft (48 definite orders)	38 by 2025
2025	12 F-35A combat aircraft	---
2016	9 P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine aircraft	2022
2022	13 L-159A ALCA 2nd hand fighter/ground attack aircraft	2024
2006–2021	28 armed drones (12 MQ-9 Reapers, 16 Protectors)	2025
2016	50 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters	2025
2011	16 CH-47F Chinook transport helicopters	2015
2021	14 MH-47G Chinook transport helicopters	---
2002	6 Bell-412 trainer/SAR helicopters	2003
2007, 2010, 2012	6 King Air ISR ground surveillance aircraft	2013
2008	4 King Air MP maritime patrol aircraft	2011
2019	3 Boeing-737 Airborne Early Warning & Control aircraft	---
2010	3 RC-135 Rivet Joint signals intelligence aircraft	2017
2016, 2019	14 T-6 Texan 2 armed trainer aircraft	2020
Land equipment		
2001–2011	667 Cougar MRAP armoured vehicles	2011
2009–2010	333 MXT-MV APCs	2011
2021	6 M-270 MLRS multiple rocket launchers	2 by 2025
Missiles and bombs (numbers are estimates)		
2001–2015	6,300 Paveway IV guided bombs (Produced in UK, recorded by SIPRI as licenced production)	2017
2003–2022	6.970 FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank missiles	6,370 by 2025
2018	50 Mk-54 LWT anti-submarine torpedoes	2022
2005, 2023	2,844 + unknown no. GMLRS guided rockets	2,844 by 2012
Missiles and bombs (numbers are estimates)		
2006	40 AGM-65 Maverick air-to-surface missiles	2007
2012–2017	2,600 AGM-114 Hellfire-2 anti-tank/air-to-surface missiles	2017
2023	768 WGU-59 APKWS air-to-surface missiles	763 by 2025
2004–2014	110 BGM-109 Tomahawk surface-to-surface missiles	2016
2004, 2006, 2022	562 AIM-120D AMRAAM long-range air-to-air missiles	362 by 2008
2001	336 Stinger portable surface-to-air missiles	2004
Order year(s)	Description	Delivered by
Naval weapons		
2017, 2023	13 Mk-41 VLS naval surface-to-air missiles systems	--
2006, 2012	22 Phalanx naval guns	2017
2016	3 Mk-45-4 127mm naval guns	--
Sensors		
2007	10 AAQ-33 Sniper ATP aircraft electro-optical systems	2007
2006	2 APY-8 Lynx ground-surveillance radars (for UAVs)	2007

4 The transatlantic military-industrial complex

The large-scale exchange of arms between the US and the UK is reflected in their respective arms industries, with UK companies having large subsidiaries in the US, and vice versa. In at least one case, that of Meggitt, what was originally a UK-based company came to have substantially larger operations in the US than in its UK home base. Meggitt was taken over by US engineering company Parker Hannifin in 2022; thus instead of a UK company with most of its business in the US, it became part of a US company with some of its business in the UK.

Much of this interchange on both sides came from mergers and acquisitions, whereby companies in one country acquired companies in the other. For example, BAE Systems' dramatic expansion in the US came from the acquisition of Lockheed Martin Control Systems and Lockheed Martin Aerospace Electronic Systems in 2000, establishing its military electronics business in the US; and United Defense in 2005 and Armor Group in 2007, establishing it as a major US armoured vehicle, artillery and naval weapons producer.

However, some of the major US subsidiaries in the UK were the result of new investments by the US companies, generally to support contracts with the MOD – for example, Boeing Defence UK was largely established in the 2000s to support the MOD's Boeing-produced platforms such as the Apache and Chinook helicopters, C-17 transport aircraft, and Posiedon anti-submarine helicopters (see section 3). Likewise, General Dynamics Land Systems greatly expanded their UK operations to produce the Ajax armoured vehicles for which they won the MOD contract in 2010, converting a former fork-lift truck factory in South Wales.[11]

Thus, while UK companies acquired subsidiaries in the US largely to gain profitable access to the gigantic US DOD arms market, in many cases US companies established (or greatly expanded) subsidiaries in the UK to support existing relationships and contracts with the UK MOD.

11 https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ajax-vehicle-brings-merthyr-tydfil-factory-back-to-life



Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaking to Lockheed Martin employees, Fort Worth, Texas, Jan 2026. **Credit:** US Department of Defense.

The US subsidiaries of foreign arms companies are generally subject to significant restrictions to ensure continued US oversight and control of their operations, and prevent leakage of sensitive technologies, or closure of facilities by the foreign owners. They are required to have a 'shadow board' of directors, with minimal contact with the foreign parent, and to operate effectively as a separate company, though of course its profits ultimately go to the parent. An exception is BAE Systems, which has special dispensation to be treated as if it were a US company. While the US subsidiary, BAE Systems Inc., has its own board, there is a greater degree of contact with and control from BAE Systems' UK headquarters.

UK subsidiaries of US companies, as with all such subsidiaries of foreign owners, must be registered with Companies House as a UK company, and have their own directors, but they are generally subject to full control by the parent company, although occasionally the government might impose at least transitional conditions in the case of acquisitions by foreign companies of key UK arms producers; and, for example, were Leonardo of Italy to decide for some reason to shutter its helicopter production site at Yeovil, the former Westland Helicopters, it seems unlikely that the UK government would not step in to ensure its continued operation, perhaps through nationalisation.

The extent of UK arms companies' operations in the US, and the often substantial proportion of their overall revenues derived from these businesses, underlines another dimension of the UK's military-industrial dependence on the US, namely the UK arms industry's dependence on the US market.

4.1 UK companies with US subsidiaries

Table 2: UK arms companies in the US

Company	Total 2025 revenue (£m)	Total employees	% revenue from US	% employees in US	Other info
BAE Systems	30,700	111,400	43% to US customers ~40% from US business	32%	
Rolls-Royce	21,200	42,800	27.4% to US customers	12.4%	
QinetiQ	1,923 (2025–26)	7,378 (Mar 2026)	15% (to US customers, from US business)	Not known	
Melrose Industries	3,589	13,844	65% (North American customers)	Not known	28% of segment assets in US. 33% of open roles in US (Sep 2026)
Serco	4,877	50,000	30% (North American customers)	~20%	63% of defence revenue from N.A. customers
Babcock	5,178 (2025–26)	29,000	5% (US customers)	Not known	Most US sales seem to be from UK
Chemring	497.5	2,802	33% (US customers)	Not known	30% of non-current assets in US

BAE Systems

BAE Systems has three major divisions that are primarily based in the US:

1) Aerospace and Mission Systems (formerly Electronic Systems). This includes "electronic warfare systems, navigation systems, electro-optical sensors, military and commercial digital engine and flight controls, precision guidance and seeker solutions, next generation military communications systems and data links, persistent surveillance capabilities and electric drive propulsion systems, as well as space electronics, spacecraft, ground and tactical systems."[12] This business unit also includes BAE's plant at Rochester, Kent in the UK. BAE's products in this area are used on a wide variety of land, marine, air, and space platforms.

2) Platforms & Services – this division consists of BAE's US, Sweden, and UK-based land systems business and its US-based naval guns and naval and commercial ship repair business. "Platforms & Services is a leading provider of tracked and wheeled armored combat vehicles, naval guns, naval ship repair and modernization, artillery and missile launching systems, advanced precision strike munitions and ordnance, and other technologies for US and international customers."[13] US products include the ARCHER mobile howitzer, the Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicle, and the M777 lightweight towed howitzer. They also operate two major Government-Owned-Contractor-Operated (GOCO) munitions plants in the US.

3) Cyber and Intelligence – This includes the US-based Intelligence & Security segment, as well as the UK-based Digital Intelligence segment. The US section provides various capabilities for air and space systems, systems engineering, integration, and sustainment services for C4ISR systems, and "innovative mission-enabling solutions and services to enhance the collection, analysis, and processing of intelligence".

In 2025, according to BAE's Annual Report, 43% of the company's £30.7 billion sales were to the US – more than the 27% that were to the UK, and 32% of its 111,400 employees were in the US, compared to 48% in the UK. BAE's UK operations also include a large proportion of its export sales, especially to Saudi Arabia, in large part explaining the discrepancy between the sales and employment shares (and of course

12 https://www.baesystems.com/en-us/who-we-are/electronic-systems.html
13 https://www.baesystems.com/en-us/who-we-are/platforms-and-services.html

some of the sales to US customers may come from UK and other operations). Exactly how much of their sales derive from their US operations is not clear, as their Aerospace & Mission Systems/Electronic Systems division, while mostly based in the US, has an unknown proportion of its operations in the UK. However, US sales must include the great majority of the £7.5 billion from this division, as well as 73% of its £5 billion revenue from Platforms & Services (with 23% coming from BAE's Bofors and Hägglunds subsidiaries in Sweden, and 4% from its UK land systems business), and 67% of its £2.4 billion Cyber & Intelligence division (the other 33% coming from the UK-based Digital Intelligence business – thus probably amounting to about 40% of total revenue, or just over £12 billion.[14] Thus, BAE is almost as much a US company as it is a UK one, and the US Department of Defense is a bigger customer than the UK MOD. Of course, while BAE enjoys a uniquely close relationship with the MOD, and essentially guaranteed contracts, it is only one of many such top contractors for the DOD. In Fiscal Year 2024, it was the 13th largest DOD contractor, with $8.3 billion worth of contract obligations,[15] or the 10th biggest among actual arms companies (three of the larger recipients were health care corporation). Thus, it is subject to much greater competition for both contracts and political influence.

Given BAE's deep embedding in the UK state, the fact that the company is also so highly invested in the US arms industry, and that the DOD is its single biggest customer, also has political implications, reinforcing the UK-US military-political relationship.

Rolls-Royce

In 2025, 5,300 of Rolls-Royce's 42,800 employees, or 12.4%, were based in the US and Canada.[16] Rolls-Royce has 34 sites in the US, of which at least 8 involve military production.[17] Of the company's £21.2b total revenue, £5.8b, or 27.4%, was from customers in the US, although the breakdown of this between civil and military business is not available. However, the company has significant military business in the US. Rolls-Royce produce engines for the V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor plane, the C-130 military transport aircraft, and the MQ-25 Stingray refueller drone.[18] The Chief Executive's review in the annual report for 2025 (p8), under "Defence", states "Over the past decade we have invested more than $1bn in technology enhancements, facility upgrades and test capabilities at our Indianapolis, US site."

QinetiQ

QinetiQ was created by the privatisation in 2001 of the MOD's Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA). It focuses on advanced military technology, R&D services, test and training, engineering services, and mission support and operations. It mostly provides military services and technology development rather than equipment as such. QinetiQ North America was established in 2004 with the acquisition of a number of US companies. It has continued to expand its US presence since then, with the most significant recent acquisition being Avantus Federal in 2022.[19]

14 From BAE's website, their UK-based Aerospace & Missions Systems section appears to consist of the Rochester facility, which has 1,800 employees, out of 22,400 for the division as a whole, or 8%. If a similar proportion of revenue comes from the UK branch, this would mean £6,900m would be from the US part of the division. Adding in the 73% of Platforms & Services (£3,650m) and 67% of Cyber & Intelligence (£1,600m) would give a total of about £12,150m, or 40% of total revenue.

15 https://sam.gov/reports/awards/static

16 Annual Report 2025

17 https://www.rolls-royce.com/country-sites/northamerica.aspx

18 Ibid.

19 https://www.qinetiq.com/en-us/who-we-are/our-history

QinetiQ's primary customer by far is the UK MOD, accounting for 60% of its £1,923 million 2025/26 revenue.[20] However, it has numerous US locations, and derived 10% of its revenue from the US DOD, and 15% from US customers overall, or $385 million (£288m).[21] Its US-based businesses generated £291m in revenue, indicating that (as to be expected from a primarily services-based company), its various business units sell largely to customers in the country in which they are based.[22] The company does not report the number of employees by country.

The report states (p30): "Our US sector provides specialist engineering, systems integration and mission operations support to defence and homeland security customers across the United States, operating across priority mission areas including space and missile defence, maritime systems, persistent surveillance, sensing and autonomy."

Melrose Industries

Melrose Industries acquired GKN in 2018, and have subsequently focused solely on aerospace business, both civil and military (GKN formerly included a large vehicles division and other engineering business). Melrose have two divisions, engines and aerostructures, the latter being the former GKN Aerospace business. Their total revenue in 2025 was £3,589m, of which 29% was defence.[23]

Melrose has manufacturing operations in 12 countries, including 4 "Global Technology Centres" – the UK, the US, Sweden, and Germany, with the US one being in Fort Worth, Texas.[24] They have at least 12 sites in the US.[25] (They do not operate in Canada).

In 2025, according to its Annual Report, Melrose received 65% of its revenue from customers in North America (£2,349m out of £3,589m). However, only 28% of the company's segment assets were in North America, suggesting a substantial proportion of the North American business may be exports from other parts of the world. There is no breakdown of employees by country; however, of 13,844 employees, only 3,238 are in the UK. A search on their careers page found 100 out of 307 open roles were in the US.[26] Overall, this suggests a substantial proportion of Melrose's business is based in the US.

Key US military platforms in which Melrose is a supplier for include the F-35 combat aircraft, the Apache attack helicopter, the Black Hawk utility helicopter, the CH-47 Chinook transport helicopter, and the C-130J transport aircraft.[27] They produce canopies for the F-35 at their Garden Grove, CA facility. Their GKN Aerospace Services subsidiary in the UK also produces for the F-35, and is registered for the Open General Export Licence (OGEL) covering the programme. GKN Aerospace designs and manufactures the electrical wiring interconnected systems, flaperons, in-flight opening doors, cockpit canopy, air frame parts and arresting gear for all F-35 aircraft.[28]

20 QinetiQ Annual Report 2026
21 Ibid, p17.
22 Ibid, p23.
23 Melrose Annual Report 2025, p1, 8, **https://www.melroseplc.net/media/qc0eu5o1/melrose-annual-report25.pdf**
24 **https://www.melroseplc.net/about-us/, annual report**
25 From their Careers page, checked 25th August 2026, **https://joinus.gknaerospace.com**
26 Ibid.
27 AR p8.
28 **https://caat.org.uk/data/countries/israel/mapped-all-the-uk-companies-manufacturing-components-for-israels-f35-combat-aircraft/**

Serco

Serco is a major outsourcing company, including a wide range of military services, such as maintenance, training, recruitment, logistics, and facilities management, operating in the UK and Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Australia. More recently, they have also moved into arms production as well as military services. According to their website, they had £4.9b revenues in 2025, and over 50,000 employees, including £2.0 billion revenue from North America, and over 10,000 employees.[29]

Their total revenue in 2025 was £4,877m, of which £1,726m (35.4%) was in their Defence business. North American revenue was £1,463m, of which £1,084m (74%) was in Defence. Thus, despite being a UK-based company, the majority of their military revenue comes from North America, almost certainly the great majority of which is from the US.[30]

Their US military projects include designing the USX-1 Defiant uncrewed naval vessel, a 55m long 240 metric tonne ship designed to operate for 12 months at sea without humans.[31] Their US military business also includes acquisition and programme management, facilities modernising and management ("base modernisation and intelligent facilities"), design & engineering, hardware engineering, logistics & mission readiness, and platform, satellite, and radar modernisation.[32]

Babcock

The only major UK-headquartered company that appears not to have a major US presence is shipbuilders, naval base management, and military services company Babcock International. Their annual report states that 5% of their revenue is from North America, but much of this appears to come from their UK operations, including work for US military vessels produced by US company Huntington-Ingalls at Babcock's Rosyth naval base. Their only apparent significant US-based operation is civil, Cavendish Nuclear, which works on decommissioning, fuel removal, decontaminating and dismantling nuclear reactors.[33]

Chemring

Chemring produce energetics and counter-measures, as well as electronic warfare equipment, cyber services and solutions, and biological detection systems. They had revenues of £497.5m in 2025, and 2,802 employees.[34]

Chemring's US businesses encompass all these areas, including Roke USA (electronic warfare), Chemring Countermeasures Chemring Energetic Devices, and Chemring Sensors and Electronic Systems.[35] They do not break down their employees by location, but 33% of Chemring's 2025 revenue was from the US – it seems the great majority of this from its US operations – and 30% of its non-current assets were based in the US.[36]

29 https://www.serco.com, **https://www.serco.com/na**, checked 25th August 2026.
30 Serco Annual Report 2025, p182, **https://www.serco.com/media/13673/serco-annual-report-and-accounts-2025.pdf**
31 AR 2025 p19
32 **https://www.serco.com/na/capabilities/defense**
33 **https://www.cavendishnuclear.com/where-we-do-it/usa/**
34 Chemring annual report 2025, **https://www.chemring.com/investors/annual-reports/2025**
35 **https://www.chemring.com/about-us/our-business/chemring-energetic-devices**
36 Chemring annual report 2025, p101.

4.2 US arms companies with UK subsidiaries

Many of the top US arms companies have significant UK subsidiaries. Given the far larger size of these companies, their UK business represents a far smaller share of their overall business than US revenue represents to most of the UK companies discussed above. Some of these companies have nonetheless developed strong relationships with the UK MOD.

Table 3 – US arms companies with UK subsidiaries

Company	UK revenue (year)	UK employees	Payment by MOD (2024/25)
Boeing Defence UK	£571m (2024)	2,100	£512m
General Dynamics UK	£348m	1,026	£288m
Lockheed Martin UK	£523m (2024) inc. 50% stake in Ascent Flight Training	1,705 (not inc. Ascent)	£378m (inc. 50% Ascent stake)
RTX (Raytheon Systems UK, Collins Aerospace UK, Pratt & Whitney UK)	~£2,400m (2025, reporting unclear. Large proportion of Collins is civil)	~6,000	£137m
Leidos Europe	£489.5m (2025)	1,263	£656m
L3 Harris	>£184.4m (2024, reporting unclear)	~1,000	£82m (parent company total - £50m to identified UK subsidiaries)
Northrop Grumman	£199.3m (2024)	776	£84m
Honeywell International	Unclear	1,758 (2025)	<£5m
Teledyne Technologies	£298m (2024)	1,460	<£5m

Boeing

Boeing Defence UK has 2,100 employees according to their website, out of 6,000 total employees for Boeing UK.[37] Their military business consists of services and support for the MOD's various Boeing platforms: the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, the H-47 Chinook heavy lift helicopter, the C-17 Globemaster military transport aircraft, the E-7 Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) aircraft, and the P-8 Poseidon Maritime Patrol and Anti-Submarine Warfare aircraft. (See section 3). Their annual report to Companies House for 2024 states "The principal activity of Boeing Defence UK Limited... is the provision of support and services for defence and security platforms, including programme management, engineering, operations, supply chain management, quality, training, maintenance and modification and flight test in support of rotary and fixed wing aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and information systems. The Company's primary customer is the UK government, specifically the UK Ministry of Defence."[38]

Boeing Defence UK made £571m revenue in 2024. All of this was from "rendering of services", and £510m was derived from UK customers. They do not state how much of this was from the MOD. However, the MOD's own Trade, Industry & Contracts data shows that in financial year April 2024 – March 2025, the MOD spent £512 million with Boeing Defence UK, while in 2023/24, the figure was £583m.[39] This suggests that virtually all of Boeing Defence's UK revenue is from the MOD. Also according to the MOD statistics, 95% of payments to Boeing Defence in 2024/25 were through non-competitive contracts – namely, the contracts for supporting and maintaining Boeing-supplied equipment were awarded without competition. Boeing received the most revenue from the MOD of any UK subsidiary of a US arms company.[40]

37 https://www.boeing.co.uk

38 https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/01290439/filing-history

39 https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-trade-and-industry-index

40 The MOD actually spent more with Leidos. However as much of the MOD spending with Leidos was "pass-through" spending for the purchase of commodities, which does not count as revenue for Leidos (see below under Leidos), Boeing had more revenue from the MOD.

General Dynamics

General Dynamics United Kingdom began as Computing Devices first in London then Hastings, providing avionics to military aircraft.[41] They have two main divisions: land systems, which produces the Ajax family of armoured vehicles for the British Army, and Mission Systems, which includes their original avionics business, as well as producing and supporting the Bowman tactical communications system for the MOD.[42]

The biggest, and most problematic, area of work for GD UK is the Ajax contract. General Dynamics Land Systems UK won a competition to build a new range of armoured reconnaissance vehicles for the British Army in 2010.[43] The vehicles, named Ajax,[44] were to be based on a vehicle produced by GD in Spain, and were initially supposed to enter service in 2017. The programme, so far costing £6.3 billion, has been plagued with problems, yet has stumbled on, in spite of lengthy delays and escalating costs.

In July 2021, as an initial batch of Ajax vehicles were being tested, it emerged that dozens of soldiers were becoming ill from using them,[45] including with hearing problems and vomiting, as a result of severe noise and vibrations in many of the hulls.[46] Trials were halted, and cancellation was considered, but the programme was allowed to continue.

A new timetable was agreed in 2023, and deliveries began in 2025, with the army announcing the Ajax had achieved initial operating capability in November that year – eight years late. Yet, just a month later, reports emerged that in spite of supposed fixes to the earlier problems by GD, many soldiers were still getting ill from using them, with the same vibration problems causing numbness in hands and feet, and "shaking to the point of vomiting" in some of those testing the Ajax.[47] In February 2026, the MOD confirmed that the first 100 Ajax vehicles had been withdrawn from service, awaiting upgrades.[48] The MOD announced a two-phase restart plan for testing and hardware upgrades to the Ajax in June 2026, with the hope of achieving full operating capability by 2028 or 2029, 14 years after the contract was signed.[49]

In a context of persistent delays, cost overruns, and technical problems with major MOD arms procurements, the Ajax programme is widely regarded as one of the most catastrophic failures, frequently castigated by MPs and the National Audit Office. Yet the programme has continued, and GD UK has continued to win MOD contracts and faced few consequences, although there was a temporary halt to payments on the contract.[50]

General Dynamics UK made revenue of £348m in 2024, the vast majority from UK customers.[51] Of this, £265m was from Land Systems, presumably primarily the Ajax program, while £36m was from C4 (computers, command, control, and communication), and £47m was from Avionics. They had 1,026 employees.

41 https://generaldynamics.uk.com/about/
42 https://generaldynamics.uk.com
43 https://www.reuters.com/article/breakingviews/general-dynamics-beats-bae-to-uk-tanks-contract-idUSLDE62L1JU/
44 https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9764/CBP-9764.pdf
45 https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/weapons/a37093035/british-armored-vehicle-making-soldiers-sick-problems/
46 https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/british-armys-greek-tragedy
47 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj9y0l7j1nwo
48 https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/first-100-ajax-vehicles-withdrawn-and-awaiting-upgrades/
49 https://www.thedefensenews.com/UK-MoD-Launches-Two-Phase-Restart-Plan-for-Ajax-Armoured-Vehicle-Trials/
50 See e.g. Iain Overton, https://aoav.org.uk/2026/why-did-the-ajax-programme-result-in-so-little-corporate-consequence-and-what-does-this-reveal-about-systemic-weaknesses-in-uk-defence-procurement-and-oversight/
51 General Dynamics UK Annual Report 2024, https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/01911653

According to their 2022 report,[52] the problems with the Ajax vehicles led to a suspension of cash payments by the MOD on the contract in 2020, which continued through 2022; payments resumed in 2023, according to the 2024 report. However, the delays in payments contributed to the company recording losses of £6.2m and £10.2m in 2023 and 2024. Nonetheless, in the period 2015–24, following the signing of the Ajax contract, the company made total profits after tax of £401m, on revenues of £5,688, far from a terrible result. During the years 2016–2024 when figures are reported, 74% of GD's revenues were specified as from Ajax (2026–2021), or UK government land systems contracts (2022–24).[53]

Lockheed Martin

Lockheed Martin is the world's largest arms company, producer of the F-16 and F-35 combat aircraft, owner of Sikorsky helicopters, and much more. Lockheed Martin have 3 UK subsidiaries: Lockheed Martin UK Limited, which focuses on space, as well as training and simulation systems, and support for the UK's F-35 programme; Lockheed Martin UK Ampthill, which produces turrets for the Ajax armoured vehicles, as well as command and control systems; and Lockheed Martin UK Strategic Systems. While separated into these three corporate entities, the company's UK website covers all three, so it is not always entirely clear which operations fall under which subsidiary, although the Ampthill company, based at Ampthill in Bedfordshire, has clearly identifiable activities.[54] Lockheed Martin UK also has operations in Chippenham, Gloucester, Reading, Lincoln, and Glasgow, as well as a head office in London.[55]

In addition, Lockheed Martin UK has a 50% stake in the Ascent Flight Training Ltd. joint venture, with the other 50% owned by Babcock International. Ascent provide the UK armed forces' UK Military Flying Training Scheme (UKMFTS), a public-private partnership operating since 2008, providing live flight, simulator, and classroom-based training to fixed and rotary wing aircrew since 2008.[56] They operate out of a Bristol training hub, RAF bases at Barkston Heath, Cranwell, Shawbury, and Valley, RNAS Culdrose, and the Army Air Corps base at Middle Wallop.[57]

The three wholly-owned Lockheed subsidiaries made a combined £439.9m revenue in 2024, and had 1,705 employees. They received a combined £290m spending by the MOD in 2024/25, 66% of their revenue.[58] Ascent Flight Training made £176.8m revenue in 2025/26, up from £166.4m in 2024/25. The MOD spent £176.5m with Ascent in 2024/25, indicating that not all such spending is recognised as revenue in the company accounts. The MOD appear to be Ascent's sole customer.[59]

52 GD UK annual report 2022, see note 46.

53 GD annual reports to Companies House, see note 46.

54 See Lockheed Martin UK website, **https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-gb/products.html**, and Companies House records for the three companies at **https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/02372738**, **https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC353450**, and **https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/00585852**

55 CAAT companies browser, **https://caat.org.uk/data/companies/lockheed-martin/map**

56 **https://ascentflighttraining.com/case-study/military-flight-training-case-study/**

57 **https://ascentflighttraining.com/about-ascent/**

58 Annual Reports to Companies House, note 37, and MOD Trade, Industry & Contracts, note 33.

59 **https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/06522636**
https://ascentflighttraining.com

RTX/Raytheon

RTX is the world's second largest arms company, which has grown in the past decade out of Raytheon Systems, through a merger with United Technologies in 2020. United Technologies had itself acquired Rockwell Collins in 2018, merging it with its UTC Aerospace business to form its Collins Aerospace subsidiary. Also part of United Technologies, and now of RTX, is Pratt & Whitney, the military and civil aircraft engine maker, which along with GE make most of the US's military aircraft engines.

RTX in the UK includes subsidiaries of Collins Aerospace and Pratt & Whitney, as well as Raytheon Systems Ltd. RTX has 6,000 employees in the UK, according to its website, making it by far the largest US arms company presence in the UK.[60]

Raytheon Systems Limited is the largest unit reported to Companies House.[61] This company made £518m revenue in 2025, and had 1,905 employees.[62] The majority of its revenue in 2025 came from "weapons", with £295m. This includes the production of Paveway IV guided bombs at Glenrothes in Scotland, as well as other precision weapons, including the UK-developed Red Kite.[63] However it also had significant revenue in Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance. "National Security", sensors, space, and training.

Collins Aerospace in the UK operate from 12 separate locations, and conduct a wide range of activities: aerostructures, avionics, interiors, mission systems (including ISTAR, communications, and AI systems), power and controls, and MRO. They have significant commercial aviation business as well as military production.[64] Collins Aerospace operates through numerous subsidiaries in the UK, and identifying all of them is challenging, as there does not seem to be any consolidated reporting of Collins' business with Companies House. However, the Collins Aerospace UK 2025 Gender Pay Gap report states that "the combined reportable companies within Collins in the U.K. employed 5,467 employees".[65] It also identifies a number of the separate subsidiaries in the report, with data for each: Goodrich Actuation Systems (subsequently sold to French aero-engine maker Safran), Goodrich Control Systems, Atlantic Inertial Systems, Rohr Aero Services, Rockwell Collins UK, HS Marston Aerospace, and B/E Aerospace. These companies had a combined 4,359 employees in 2024 (most of them did not have reports for 2025 published at the time of writing). However, subsidiaries with less than 250 employees do not need to be reported in Gender Pay Gap reports. While the combined employees of Raytheon UK and Collins reported here add up to 7,372, the sale of Goodrich Actuation Systems, with its 1,491 employees makes the figures more consistent with the 6,000 reported for RTX in the UK as a whole.[66]

60 https://www.rtx.com/who-we-are/global-presence/uk, checked 31st August 2026.

61 https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/00406809

62 Raytheon Systems Limited annual report 2025, see note 44.

63 https://www.rtx.com/news/news-center/2026/07/21/raytheon-uk-unveils-sovereign-digitally-engineered-precision-weapon-red-kite

64 https://www.rtx.com/collinsaerospace/who-we-are/about-us/global/europe/uk
https://www.rtx.com/who-we-are/global-presence/uk

65 https://prd-sc102-cdn.rtx.com/collinsaerospace/-/media/ca/u/uk/uk-2025-gender-pay-gap-report.pdf?rev=6db2747d2df340e08caf704983ba2a48&rid=56c45a5d1c97408aa54725b4ecea641c&hash=-49166FA1AE2A1D328FCD5A6B0A9BEA8B

66 Annual reports of the named companies with Companies House. See https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk. There is one other company that was part of RTX, reported in MOD figures, Hamilton Sundstrand, which in the UK has a subsidiary Claverham Limited, which designs actuation systems, and had 16 employees and £2.4m revenue in 2024. It was sold to Safran in 2025 along with Goodrich Actuation Systems. See https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/03384710/filing-history.

The reported Collins companies had combined revenues of £1,873 million, of which £534m was for the subsequently sold Goodrich Actuation Systems. Far from all of what remains is military business, as the companies sell to both the civil and military aerospace market, and indeed B/E Aerospace, with £699m revenues in 2024, is entirely civil.

Pratt & Whitney's main UK activity appears to be sustainment and support for the P&W-made F135 engines that power the F-35 combat aircraft. This is done through the Pratt and Whitney Military United Kingdom Limited subsidiary, which had just 8 employees in 2025, and revenues of £6.2m. According to their Companies House report, "The principal activities of the Company during the year were assisting in the management of Global Spares Network to support the global F135/F-35 program."[67] Pratt & Whitney Canada also have a small subsidiary in the UK with 21 employees, focusing on aero engine repair.

Between Collins and Raytheon UK, RTX are clearly the largest US arms company in the UK by revenue. However, its various subsidiaries received just £137m in MOD spending in 2024/25, reflecting the fact that much of the companies' production is either civil or consists of components likely sold to other arms companies rather than directly to the MOD.

Leidos Europe

Leidos is a major US military technology and services company. Leidos has two subsidiaries in the UK that contract with the MOD: Leidos Europe Ltd., and Leidos Innovations UK.

Leidos Europe describes the MOD as its sole customer in its 2025 annual report.[68] It states "In April 2015, the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) awarded Leidos Europe, Limited... a contract to manage and deliver its Logistics, Commodities and Services Transformation Programme ("LCS(T)"). The LCS(T) programme is to run for 13 years with an estimated revenue of £6 billion." Leidos Europe received £273.5m revenue in 2025. This is substantially less than the spending recorded by the MOD with Leidos Europe in 2024/25, which is over £600m. The discrepancy is explained by the fact that Leidos Europe do not count payments for commodities procured on behalf of the MOD as revenue – this is "pass through" spending. Only payments for the services provided, including the service of procuring commodities, counts as revenue. The company had 235 staff in 2025.

Leidos Innovations UK "...delivers innovative technology and solutions focused on safeguarding critical capabilities and transformation in frontline services."[69] They operate in defence, healthcare, government safety and security, and transportation. They made £216m revenue in 2025, and had 1,028 employees. They do not break this down by customer, but the MOD spent £56m with them in 2025.

67 Pratt & Whitney Military UK annual report for 2025, **https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/10993629**

68 Leidos Europe annual report 2025, **https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/09351724**

69 Leiods Innovations UK annual report 2025, **https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC112421**

L3-Harris

L3-Harris is the world's 10th largest arms company, according to SIPRI. It produces a wide range of electronics and communications systems, including avionics, command and control, and electronic warfare systems, for land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains.

L3Harris operates at 12 sites in the UK, and has nearly 1,000 employees in the country, according to the company.[70] It operates numerous subsidiaries and intermediate holding companies, making the full scope of its UK operations hard to track. Identified subsidiaries in the UK in 2024 had 898 employees and made £184.4 million revenues.[71]

It reports that its current and predecessor companies have provided services to the UK's military for over 100 years. The UK company is part of the Airseeker/ Rivet Joint reconnaissance aircraft programme. L3Harris also produces its T7 and T4 multi-mission robots at its UK sites. It is developing a new tactical radio product Morpheus in the UK, and previously supplied the Bowman tactical C4I system to the UK Armed Forces. It has also as delivered 100 autonomous surface vehicle (ASV) systems to the Royal Navy. It is working with Thales UK to develop an integrated short-range air defence (SHORAD) command and control capability.[72]

The most controversial part of L3's operations in the UK is L3 Harris Release and Integrated Solutions in Brighton, which produces bomb release systems for aircraft, including drones, and has been the subject of frequent protest by local activists. They produce bomb release cables for the F-35 combat aircraft, and work with the Israeli Air Force to modify Israel's F-35I Adir's to use Israeli munitions as well as US ones. Their Hornet bomb racks have also been used in Turkey's TB-2 Bayraktar UAVs, which have been used in numerous wars worldwide.[73]

Others

Northrop Grumman were the world's third largest arms company in 2024, according to SIPRI. They had 776 employees in the UK in 2025, and made £199.3m revenue. Their UK subsidiary provides IT services to the UK government, and "a range of military and commercial programmes within and outside the UK". Over 90% of its revenue in 2025 was from the UK.[74]

Honeywell International were the 27th largest arms company worldwide in 2024. Their UK operations are distributed between a number of different entities, and are hard to track. However, according to their 2025 Gender Pay Gap report, they had 1,758 employees in the UK in 2025.[75]

Teledyne Technologies, a military electronics company, were 69th on the SIPRI Top 100 list in 2024. Their UK subsidiary made £298.1m revenue in 2025, and had 1,460 staff. At 14.5% of their global turnover, this is a higher share for their UK operations than most significant US arms companies.

This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but it does seem to cover most large US arms companies with significant military-related activities in the UK.

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70 https://www.l3harris.com/sites/default/files/2026-08/L3Harris-International-Fact-Sheet-United-Kingdom.pdf

71 Companies House annual reports for: L3 Harris ASV Autonomous Surface Vehicles; L3Harris Communications Systems UK; L3Harris Cyber-Cyonyx; L3Harris MAPPS; L3Harris Release & Integrated Solutions; and L3Harris TRL Technologies.

72 https://caat.org.uk/data/companies/l3harris

73 https://caat.org.uk/data/companies/l3harris

74 Annual report 2025 to Companies House

75 https://www.honeywell.com/content/dam/honeywellbt/en/documents/downloads/country-page-files/hon-corp-uk-gender-pay-gap-2025-report-en.pdf

4.3 Summary

Most major UK-headquartered arms companies have substantial US-based operations, ranging from a significant minority (e.g. Rolls-Royce and QinetiQ) in the 10–15% range, to around 40% for BAE and possibly a majority for Melrose, with Babcock the only major exception. The US market is thus absolutely crucial for the UK arms industry, both as an export customer and as a secondary base of operations and source of profits.

The US market is thus absolutely crucial for the UK arms industry, both as an export customer and as a secondary base of operations and source of profits.

In contrast, UK-based subsidiaries of major US arms companies represent a much smaller share of these companies' overall business than vice versa, and are generally smaller in absolute terms as well than the biggest UK subsidiaries in the US. Some, like Boeing, General Dynamics, and Leidos, either established their presence in the UK or greatly expanded it in response to winning specific MOD contracts. Boeing and GD have the closest relationships with the MOD through Boeing's sustainment work for the various Boeing platforms owned by the UK military, and General Dynamics's work on the Ajax armoured vehicles family – though the catastrophic performance of that contract may not put the company in a great place to win future MOD contracts. RTX/Raytheon have a larger overall presence in the UK, although their direct relationship with the MOD, chiefly through the Paveway IV guided bomb programme and other precision weapons, is smaller. Overall, this represents a significant footprint of the US arms industry in the UK, though not making them dominant players.

5 The role of UK industry in key US arms supply chains

Section 2 presented data on UK arms exports to the US, including from SIPRI and UK export licences. But while the first only covers complete systems and large subsystems, "major conventional weapons", the second provides limited detail that does not allow one to see what specific weapons and weapons systems and platforms UK arms exports contribute to. The description "components for combat aircraft" (one of the most common in the government data), tells one neither what type of components are involved, nor which combat aircraft of the many the US produces they are for.

This section presents available information from other sources on the role played by the UK arms industry in a number of key US weapons programmes. This information most often comes from the companies themselves, and is therefore limited to what they choose to make public.

The F-35 combat aircraft

The UK has been involved in the US F-35 5th generation stealth combat aircraft almost from the beginning. According to a National Audit Office Report from July 2025,

> *"The UK became the first partner to the US in the Joint Strike Fighter project in 1995... The UK paid 10% of the concept demonstration phase costs for the future aircraft equating to £144 million. In January 2001, the UK committed $2 billion (£1.7 billion) to the programme to become the first and only 'level 1' partner."*[76]

As such, the UK arms industry was afforded a major role in producing the F-35. The oft-cited figure of 15% of the plane's value being produced in the UK is repeated in the NAO report, with over 100 UK companies involved.[77] The F-35 programme has resulted in £22 billion worth of contracts for UK companies, compared to £11b spent by the UK government on procuring and supporting the aircraft.[78] BAE Systems' UK business made £885m from the F-35 programme ("US Programmes" under their Air segment) in 2025.[79]

So important does the government regard the F-35 programme to UK defence and industry, that it created a specific 'carve-out' for the F-35 from a partial suspension of

76 National Audit Office, "The UK's F-35 capability", 11 July 2025, p15, https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/the-uks-f-35-capability.pdf
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 BAE Systems AR 2025, p42.



Lockheed Martin F-35, Joint Strike Fighter.
Credit: US Air Force

arms export licences to Israel in 2024, despite admitting that there was a clear risk that components for F-35 aircraft supplied to Israel, directly or via the United States or the global pool of spare parts, also operated by the US, might be used to commit serious violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in Gaza. Israel currently operates 48 F-35s, with 27 more on order.[80] While suspending licences for the direct supply of F-35 components to Israel, the government chose to allow continued indirect supply of such components, claiming that it would not be possible to stop them going to Israel without stopping the supply of F-35 components to the US altogether, as the Memorandum of Understanding governing the F-35 programme does not allow for partner nations to control the ultimate destination of components once supplied to the US or the global pool. The 'carve-out' involved the government completely setting aside its own Strategic Export Licensing Criteria (SELC) for the purposes of the F-35.[81]

More is known about the identities of these companies than is usual, as a result of responses to Freedom of Information requests that have disclosed the names of the companies registered for the Open General Export Licence (OGEL, see section 2) that covers exports related to the F-35 programme. From the most recent response, received in May 2026, 73 companies were registered for the OGEL.[82] Based on the NAO report, this is clearly not all the companies involved in the F-35; others may choose to apply for individual licences for their F-35 related exports, i.e. SIELs or OIELs, rather than registering for the OGEL (perhaps because they do not export frequently enough for it to be worth the administrative effort), but others may produce components lower down the supply chain that are supplied to other UK companies involved in the programme, who then conduct the exports.

80 https://caat.org.uk/publications/how-the-uk-arms-and-supports-israels-genocide-in-gaza/
81 Reference to the IHL report.
82 https://caat.org.uk/data/countries/israel/mapped-all-the-uk-companies-manufacturing-components-for-israels-f35-combat-aircraft/

Some of the key contributions of UK arms companies to the F-35 include:

- BAE Systems produce the rear fuselage at Samlesbury in Lancashire, and the active control system at Rochester in Kent
- Leonardo produce the targeting lasers for the F-35's electro-optical targeting system in Edinburgh
- L3-Harris produce the bomb release cables in Brighton
- Rolls-Royce produce the "active lift" system for the engines for the F-35B variant, which enables its Short Take-Off Vertical Landing (STOVL) capability
- Mission Systems Wimborne produce the aerial refuelling pods for the F-35B and the F-35C carrier-based variants
- Martin-Baker Aircraft Company produce the ejector seats
- Teledyne UK produce "Complex-geometry glass-fibre packers"
- GKN Aerospace (part of Melrose Industries) designs and manufactures the electrical wiring interconnected systems, flaperons, in-flight opening doors, cockpit canopy, air frame parts and arresting gear for the F-35, although at least some of these, including the cockpit canopy, are produced at their US sites. GKN produce F-35 components at their Bristol (Filton), Cowes, and Luton sites in the UK.[83]
- Rockwell Collins UK, part of RTX, produce weapons bay actuators
- Pratt & Whitney Canada UK, also part of RTX, "[assist] in the management of Global Spares Network to support the global F135/F-35 program."
- Trelleborg produce seals and bearings for the F-35
- Meggitt produce rudder pedal assemblies
- Honeywell UK produce the power and thermal management system
- EDM produce training platforms for the F-35
- Excelitas produces avionics including helmet-mounted displays
- RLC Group produces titanium fuselage components and titanium fan blades
- Dunlop Aerospace produces tyres
- Icon Aerospace Technologies produces "lightweight silicon ducting in environmental cooling system"
- Technical Fibre Products – now James Cropper – produces "wet-laid nonwovens", a type of advanced material, for the F-35
- Moog UK produce Primary and Secondary Flight Control Actuation System, Engine Lift Fan and Swivel Module Actuation Systems, Weapons Bay Door Servovalves, Wing Fold Transmission

For many of the other companies, while they are registered for the F-35 OGEL and therefore can be presumed to be producing components for it, and while we may know the general type of products they produce, we do not have specific information on what they produce for the F-35.

83 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DwN2HlrcOA, 00:58.

The F-16 combat aircraft

The F-16 Fighting Falcon, a 4th generation multi-role combat aircraft produced by Lockheed Martin, is one of the most widely-used combat aircraft in the world. There are currently around 2,800 F-16s in service in 29 countries, according to Lockheed's website.[84]

Long before the current issue relating to the indirect supply of F-35 components to Israel, in 2002 the then Labour government made a similar exception to a ban on arms sales to Israel that might be used in the West Bank or Gaza, for the export by BAE Systems of Head-Up Displays to be incorporated into F-16 aircraft for export to Israel. They regarded the harm to the UK's defence industrial relationship with the US from stopping such exports to be too great, despite acknowledging that Israel might well use the F-16s, incorporating these UK subsystems, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in violation of international law.[85] In this case, rather than an ad-hoc 'carve-out', they introduced a new set of additional "incorporation" criteria, covering incorporation licences, where factors such as defence industrial relations, and relations with the incorporating nation in general, could be taken into account. (These incorporation criteria no longer form part of the UK's export control rules).

BAE Systems' website confirms that their Electronic Systems site at Rochester, Kent, has supplied Head-Up Displays for the F-16, and specifically for the Block 60 version, although that does not appear to be the version used by Israel.[86] Later, a statement to Parliament by then UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband in 2009 stated that the UK supplied components for head-up displays, head-down displays, and enhanced display units for F-16s used by Israel,[87] while the website airframer.com lists Israel's Elbit Systems as the current producer of the HUDs for the F-16. So the exact nature of BAE Rochester's role in the F-16 may well have changed over the years.[88]

A brochure for the Rochester site also claims that they produced the "world's first military fly-by-wire primary flight control system for Lockheed Martin F-16".[89]
It is not clear if this is still produced for current versions of the F-16.

Apart from BAE:

- Martin-Baker produce the ejector seat for the Block 70/72 F-16s (one of the latest versions).[90]
- Dunlop Air Tyres produce tyres for the F-16[91]
- Collins Aerospace UK describe themselves as a "Global leader in the supply of visual systems for military flight simulators, including trainer aircraft, fast jets, and wide-body and rotary-wing aircraft. Aircraft types include F-35, F-16, Typhoon, C-130, A400M, UH-60 Black Hawk, MV-22 Osprey and many more".[92]

84 https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-us/products/f-16.html
85 https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2002-07-08/debates/1d00de9f-d8ae-45d1-b2dd-8d35f6d146b3/ExportLicences
86 https://www.baesystems.com/en-uk/product/displays, https://www.baesystems.com/en-uk/product/digital-light-engine-headup-display-hud
87 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090421/wmstext/90421m0001.htm
88 https://www.airframer.com/aircraft_detail.html?model=F-16_Fighting_Falcon
89 https://www.baesystems.com/dam/jcr:780ef9c0-a655-4414-9573-af199ddacfa5/24-b77-UK-Rochester-Visitor-brochure_A4_4.2026_WEB.pdf
90 https://martin-baker.com/ejection-seats/us18e/
91 https://www. airframer.com
92 https://www.rtx.com/collinsaerospace/who-we-are/about-us/global/europe/uk

F-22 Raptor

The US's F-22 Raptor stealth fighter aircraft is probably the most advanced of its kind, though its use is more limited than the F-35 as it is primarily an air superiority fighter, rather than a multi-role aircraft that also acts as a bomber, like the F-35 and F-16.

- BAE Systems in Rochester have produced head-up displays for the F-22.[93]
- GKN Aerospace produce ice protection systems for the F-22 in Luton.[94]

Apache attack helicopter

In his Parliamentary statement in 2009, Foreign Secretary Miliband also stated "Licences have been approved for the export of components to the US for incorporation into equipment for use on Apache helicopters ultimately destined for Israel. These licences covered parts for the fire control and radar system, navigation equipment and engine assemblies."[95] The companies involved have not been identified.

C-130J transport aircraft

The C-130J Hercules/Super Hercules, produced by Lockheed Martin, is a medium transport aircraft, with over 500 aircraft delivered to 22 countries.[96]

Marshall Group of Cambridge "has extensive experience providing fixed-mast receiver probes for aerial refuelling on a variety of civil and military aircraft types, including the Lockheed L1011 Tristar, Embraer 145, and Lockheed Martin C-130K Mk1/Mk3 and C-130J."[97]

Marshall also state "We produce roughly 2,000 parts per year on average across legacy C-130 models and the current production C-130J Super Hercules. We are proud to have manufactured more parts for more C-130 operators than any other MRO organisation."[98]

GKN Aerospace (Melrose Industries) produce nacelles for the C-130J at Cowes on the Isle of Wight.[99]

Collins Aerospace UK produce visual systems for C-130 flight simulators (see above).

Tanker aicraft

As noted in section 2, in the list of major conventional weapons transfers recorded by SIPRI, Mission Systems Wimborne (formerly Cobham) supply aerial refuelling systems for various US-made tanker/transport aircraft, including the K707 and KC-46.

Summary

This is far from an exhaustive list, and a more extensive search through (sometimes pricey) industry sources such as the full database of Airframer.com, would almost certainly yield significantly more results. However, the above survey shows that UK-based arms companies play a significant role in the supply chains for numerous major US weapons programmes, and this business represents a significant source of revenue for UK companies – and also implicates them in war and repression linked both to US military action and US exports.

93 https://www.baesystems.com/en-uk/product/displays
94 https://www.gknaerospace.com/locations/europe/united-kingdom/?office=luton
95 https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090421/wmstext/90421m0001.htm
96 https://www.flightglobal.com/fixed-wing/2022/03/c-130j-deliveries-pass-500-aircraft-we-analyse-types-global-fleet-mix/
97 https://marshallgroup.com/en/manufacturing/subsystem-assembly
98 https://marshallgroup.com/en/manufacturing/parts-components
99 https://www.airframer.com/news/release/gkn-aerospace-secures-follow-on-order-for-c-130j-nacelles

6 Conclusions

The UK and the USA have an extensive two-way arms trade relationship, reflecting their status as close military allies, and strengthened by specific treaty arrangements and a deep intertwining of their respective arms industries.

The UK is heavily dependent on US arms supplies in a number of key areas, including Trident nuclear missiles, F-35 combat aircraft for the UK's aircraft carriers, and a range of other military fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. While many of these could in theory be replaced by domestically-produced alternatives, this would likely be a years if not decades-long enterprise (in particular for the nuclear weapons). Such major arms procurement projects, moreover, are frequently beset with delays, cost overruns, and failures of performance. Replacing US systems would therefore likely involve significant capability gaps. For example, the Boeing Poseidon P-8A Maritime Patrol Aircraft ordered by the UK in 2016, with delivery completed by 2022, was bought after the scrapping of the UK's domestic Nimrod MRA4 programme in 2010, at the time 9 years late and £789m over budget.[100] (Of course, in some cases, imports from other countries could be considered).

The UK is heavily dependent on US arms supplies in a number of key areas, including Trident nuclear missiles, F-35 combat aircraft for the UK's aircraft carriers, and a range of other military fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.

The US is much less dependent on UK arms supplies, with a far larger military budget, industry, and domestic capabilities. However, the UK is the US's largest foreign arms supplier, and plays a significant role in many major US arms programmes, most notably the F-35, of which 15% is produced in the UK. While for other aircraft like the F-16 or F-22 it is likely that alternative US suppliers could likely be found fairly easily for most UK-supplied components, with the F-35 it would likely be a longer process, though far from impossible.

100 https://www.navylookout.com/restoring-the-uks-maritime-patrol-aircraft-capability-part-1/

Nonetheless, the main dependency arising from UK arms exports to the US is that of the UK arms industry on the US as a customer in many key areas. This is reinforced by the fact that most leading UK-headquartered arms companies also have a large proportion of their operations in the US, with the UK's largest arms company, BAE Systems, having as much as 40% of their business based in the US, under their BAE Systems Inc. subsidiary. Thus, any rupture of the UK-US arms trade relationship would have serious repercussions for the UK industry.

This deep and extensive military industrial dependence of the UK on the US, both as a supplier of key weapons systems, notably nuclear missiles, and as a customer for the UK industry, entails serious negative consequences.

First of all, the nuclear dependence in particular umbilically links UK foreign policy to that of the US. The UK has been a willing and eager participant in numerous destructive US wars of choice, such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq; there may be many factors behind this, including the personal ideologies of leaders such as Prime Minister Tony Blair, but this dependence is arguably a crucial driving factor that prevents the UK from straying too far from the US in key matters of foreign policy and war.



Trident missile being fired from HMS Vanguard in 2005
Credit: Lt. Stuart Antrobus, RN/MOD / Crown copyright
Source: Wikimedia

This deep and extensive military industrial dependence of the UK on the US, both as a supplier of key weapons systems, notably nuclear missiles, and as a customer for the UK industry, entails serious negative consequences.

Similarly, the UK is closely tied to the US in its support for Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinians. The F-35 'carve-out', allowing UK-made components for these war planes to continue to be supplied to Israel, despite their use in Gaza, and requiring a wholesale abandonment of the UK's export licence criteria, not to mention its commitment to the ATT and the Genocide Convention, are the result of this military industrial dependence. This has several dimensions: industrially, the loss of business for UK arms companies if they are no longer able to supply the F-35 programme; second, militarily, as the UK is a major customer for the F-35, and depends on continued US support for sustainment of these aircraft, as well as their continued supply; and third, politically, as a serious arms embargo with Israel, including an interruption to the supply of F-35 components unless the US commits not to allow their onward export to Israel, would risk serious damage to the UK-US relationship, with the resulting risk to the wider US-UK arms trade, nuclear weapons included.

As the US under would-be dictator Donald Trump becomes more erratic and dangerous in its international policies, these issues become starker, even for those who adhere to a more traditional view of UK national security. The US initiated an illegal war with Iran on which it did not consult the UK, and which most UK politicians would probably consider not in its interests; yet the US still demands UK support, and despite the UK continuing to supply military components for use in this illegal war, and allowing the US to use UK military bases to prosecute it, the lack of actual UK involvement in combat alongside the US (in contrast to Iraq and Afghanistan) is still turning the US regime against the UK. The US has even issued military threats against fellow NATO allies Canada and Denmark,

raising the prospect, however distant, that the UK might end up supplying arms used against its own close allies – or risking a fundamental rupture with the US by stopping such arms supplies.

There is therefore a strong strategic case for reducing UK dependence on the US, aside from the powerful moral case against the UK remaining complicit in US-supported Israeli genocide in Palestine, US war crimes in Iran and Venezuela, and the US's spree of murders in the Caribbean and Atlantic, targeting civilian vessels alleged to be carrying drugs.

Ways forward – reduced militarisation, reduced dependence

CAAT ultimately seeks an end to the international arms trade and a disarmed world. We are abolitionist rather than reformist in our approach to the international production and trade in arms, as part of an ultimate vision of a just and peaceful world.

This is, clearly, not an overnight proposition nor something that can be achieved by one country alone, and there are many states between this vision and the current reality of a world where war, repression, and even genocide are supported by all major powers and their arms industries; and of rapid remilitarisation in most regions of the world in the face of growing major power tension and conflict.

In the context of the UK-US arms trade, a complete end to this trade is unlikely to be seen as realistic in the foreseeable future. However, there are ways in which the UK could seek to reduce its military industrial dependence on the US in the longer term, while ending its complicity in the worst excesses of US warmongering (in which the UK has frequently played a significant direct role in the past).

1) Proper implementation of the UK's export control criteria in relation to the United States.

Export license restrictions must be properly enforced in respect of the United States, without special exemptions

The basis on which the government normally assesses export licence applications, the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria, relies on the behaviour of international partners in a number of areas including the preservation of peace and security and violations of International Humanitarian Law. Clearly, in recent years, the US has been in contravention of a number of these criteria. Export license restrictions must be properly enforced in respect of the United States in this context, without special exemptions or the manipulation of the criteria to enable extreme permissive interpretations. When the US launches wars of aggression such as against Iran, the UK should ensure that UK equipment that is likely to be used in them is not supplied. In the case of the horrific spree of murders carried out by the US military against boats in the Caribbean, which arguably amount to crimes against humanity, this study has not found any clear evidence of a

UK role in the supply chain of the aircraft used in the attacks[101]; this does not mean that one does not exist, and the government would be in a much better position to assess this based on export licence applications. Any such applications for weapons used in these attacks should be refused.

In particular, the UK's ongoing, unprecedented F-35 carve out allowing for the continued export of components and their eventual supply to Israel is in clear contravention of the SELC, and makes the UK complicit in an ongoing genocide. No measure of political convenience or potential anger from the US President excuses its continuation. The UK should end the F-35 carve-out, making it clear to the US that continued supply of F-35 components from the UK depends on clear and effective guarantees that they will not be supplied to Israel. In this context, the UK should urgently seek to renegotiate the Memorandum of Understanding governing the programme, that currently prevents the UK or any other supplier from having any say over the final recipient state of any given component. Having now seen the political costs imposed upon the UK from our participation in the programme, and the resultant effective outsourcing of licensing decisions to the US, the government should undertake to never again enter any other such supply chain arrangement where it has no end user controls, particularly where the US is a senior partner.

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Other arms exports to the US may raise concerns regarding internal repression. At present, for example, it is not clear if any UK military equipment exported to the US has Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), as an end-user. ICE, always a force whose primary purpose is targeting immigrant communities, has become under President Trump a regime paramilitary force that terrorises communities, disappears individuals based on ethnic identity or appearance, and systematically abuses detainees. No export licences should be granted for which ICE is an end-user.

A further issue relates to the large volume of exports of small arms to the US, noted in section 2, of which it is likely that a large proportion is for commercial end-use, i.e. for wholesale and retail gun sellers. Given the severe and systemic problem of the large-scale purchase of guns from the US for use by criminal cartels in Mexico and Central America, a major contributor to these countries' gun violence problems, especial caution should be exercised in relation to such exports. It is not, at present, possible to know what if any measures the Export Control Joint Unit enacts to guard against such diversion risks.

101 In particular, MQ-9 Reaper UAVs and AC-130J Ghostrider gunships, see "Killing Spree: Extrajudicial executions in the U.S. boat strikes campaign", Adam Isacson & John Walsh, Washington Office on Latin America, 24 July 2026, **https://www.wola.org/analysis/killing-spree-extrajudicial-executions-in-the-u-s-boat-strikes-campaign/**

2) Ending the UK's nuclear weapons programme

> **We support calls by CND and other peace organisations for the UK to abandon nuclear weapons and join the Treaty for the Prevention of Nuclear Weapons**

The UK's so-called "independent nuclear deterrent" has become an unquestionable shibboleth of UK defence and security policy, a core part of the UK's image of itself as a global military power long after this has been a reality, and, especially for the Labour Party, a proof of its trustworthiness on defence. But nuclear weapons are fundamentally inhuman and immoral, involving a threat of mass indiscriminate slaughter, with civilisation-ending consequences; they serve no military utility, and the claim that they actually deter anything is highly dubious at best; the UK's nuclear weapons, and the systems and infrastructure to support them, consume 40% of the Defence budget, a major factor in any real or perceived gaps in the UK's conventional military capabilities; and crucially for the purposes of this report, they are not independent, but entirely dependent on US support and technology. They constrain the UK's foreign policy choices, umbilically linking the UK to US priorities. While nuclear weapons have never been a primary area for CAAT's research and campaigning, we support calls by CND and other peace organisations for the UK to abandon nuclear weapons and join the Treaty for the Prevention of Nuclear Weapons.

3) Reducing the UK's conventional military dependence on the US over time

> **The UK still gives far too much weight to its imagined role as a global military power, and to capabilities designed for overseas military adventures far from its shores**

CAAT supports a radical realignment of the UK's security priorities that puts human security at its heart, and places proper emphasis on the climate crisis as the single greatest threat facing the UK and the world, in contrast to the dominant position currently given to military security. This would mean a major reassessment of what military capabilities the UK actually needs as part of a broader human-centred security policy. Such ideas have been developed in much more detail by organisations such as Rethinking Security.[102]

In particular, the UK still gives far too much weight to its imagined role as a global military power, and to capabilities designed for overseas military adventures far from its shores, typically in concert with the US, of the sort that have proven so disastrous in recent decades. A recent report by Transition Security Project, "Posturing to the World", discusses this focus on global power projection and expeditionary warfare as a major component of UK military spending. They estimate that the capabilities needed to support such power projection, as well as the cost of global operations and military bases outside Europe, amounted to £14.1b in 2024/25, 23% of the military budget. They call for a refocusing of UK military spending on actual defence of the UK and its European allies, while also highlighting the vast spending on nuclear weapons, and on failed military procurement projects.

102 See e.g. this recent essay by Larry Attree with thoughts on how the Burnham government could rethink security. **https://rethinkingsecurity.org.uk/2026/09/18/can-labours-reset-extend-to-national-security/**

While we would not attempt to specify in a report such as this exactly which weapons systems should be retained or abandoned, at least some of the ones that have global power projection as a primary purpose are US-made; examples may include heavy transport aircraft, and carrier-based F-35s.

Thus, abandoning the dangerous delusion of global military power, and focusing instead on capabilities that support the defence of the UK and of Europe, would itself lead to a reduction of dependence on the US, both politically and in terms of capabilities.

When it comes to specific weapons systems the UK buys from the US, a number of approaches can be taken. First, assessing if they are really needed in the context of a changed approach to security and defence within it. Second, in the longer term, seeking to replace those systems that are still considered necessary with ones that are produced domestically, in cooperation with partners that are less implicated in global warmongering and aggression, or imported from such countries, including for example other European nations, Canada, Japan, and South Korea. This is not to deny some of these countries' own role at times in militaristic excesses and irresponsible arms trading. This need not mean eschewing all imports from the US; rather, reducing them to a level that avoids the current unhealthy level of dependence.

However, any preference for domestic production should not mean deepening the current blank check provided to the UK arms industry, which exercises a damaging degree of influence over government, contributing to a broken procurement system that serves only arms company shareholders.[103] We would not pretend that threading this needle, reforming this system, and untangling this excessively close government-industry relationship is a straightforward task.

Short of an improbable conversion to pacifism on the part of the UK government, the US-UK military alliance and the two-way arms trade and military-industrial relationship that accompanies it is not going to end in the near term. But as US behaviour under President Trump becomes increasingly damaging and unpredictable, even in the eyes of mainstream security commentators, the dangers of tying the UK too closely to the US in defence and foreign policy are becoming more apparent. Likewise, the wisdom of excessive military dependence on the US by the UK and Europe in general is increasingly recognised. This report has sought to document and map the extent of the UK-US arms trade and the intertwining of the two countries' arms industries, and the ways in which this reinforces UK dependence on the US; finally, we have proposed above some initial thoughts on how to reduce and unpick this dependence, and avoid UK complicity with the worst US excesses. We hope this can contribute to the beginning of a debate that has hitherto been sorely lacking.

As US behaviour under President Trump becomes increasingly damaging and unpredictable, even in the eyes of mainstream security commentators, the dangers of tying the UK too closely to the US in defence and foreign policy are becoming more apparent.

103 See CAAT's 2024 report "From revolving door to open-plan office:



CAMPAIGN
AGAINST
ARMS
TRADE