

UK Government Accused of Indirectly Arming Somali Pirates

By [RT](#)

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A report on the UK's weapons exports has triggered accusations that Britain may be arming Somali pirates and dictatorial regimes. MPs allege this is due to the sheer volume of guns being exported and poor oversight.

An urgent review has been launched over why some 44,000 guns were exported to East Africa in just 15 months. Government data shows that among the weapons were 30,000 assault rifles, 2,536 pistols and 11,000 rifles which ended up in countries with poor human rights records like Somalia, Egypt and Sri Lanka. Some of the weapons were also exported to Russia and South Africa.

The report, which was part of a wide-ranging inquiry into arms exports, noted the MPs want to know why UK firms would need such a large stash of new weapons, given that they already had thousands of weapons in their armory before April 2012.

MPs alleged that the sheer volume of weapons being exported meant that it was difficult to keep tabs on where they end up, prompting speculation the UK could be arming pirates in Somalia.

House of Commons Arms Export Controls Committee said that the Business Department, which approved the weapons export, did not thoroughly assess where the weapons were going. MPs also raised doubts as to whether Britain's export policy has got the "balance right between the arms trade, surveillance equipment and our economic interests."

"The evidence provided to us by Mr Bell seems to suggest that the department did not have a process of looking at the cumulative number of weapons and whether those exports fitted the scenario on the ground needed for protection."

The head of the Export Control Organisation at the Business Department, Edward Bell said he understood the worries of MPs given the large quantity of arms, although he denied the weapons had fallen into the wrong hands.

"I understand the concern about the volumes ... having now heard about the volumes, I would like to do a bit more digging around that. I have no concerns that anything untoward has happened, but I certainly will have a closer look at the volumes involved," Bell told MPs. The Business Department has now launched an internal inquiry into weapons exports.

Piracy remains a big problem in Somali despite international efforts to curtail attacks. In November of last year a US court sentenced two Somali pirates to life in prison for the killing of four American citizens onboard a yacht off the Horn of Africa in 2011.

Prosecutors said the pirates intended to kidnap the Americans and hold them for ransom in Somalia.

However, following four days of negotiations with the US Navy, the pirates shot their captives dead and opened fire on the US vessels.

There has been a significant naval operation by many countries around the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean, which has helped stop attacks. There haven't been any successful pirate raids on ships since May 2012.

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