



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

Secretary of State

21 December 2016

Stephen Twigg MP  
Chair, International Development Committee

Chris White MP  
Chair, Committees on Arms Export Controls

House of Commons  
London, SW1A 0AA

*Dear Stephen & Chris,*

Thank you for your letter of 14 December asking that, in the light of the US decision to halt some arms sales to Saudi Arabia, I urgently review the Government's position on arms sales to Saudi Arabia pending an independent investigation into breaches of International Humanitarian Law by both sides to the conflict in Yemen.

As you have noted, the Government made clear in its response to the report by your Committees that it is confident in its robust case-by-case assessment of export licence applications and is therefore satisfied that extant licences for exports to Saudi Arabia are compliant with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

We regularly raise the importance of compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL) with the Saudi Arabian Government and other members of the military Coalition. I did so myself during my visit to Saudi Arabia on 11 December, when I had detailed discussions with the Saudi leadership.

We keep the situation in Yemen under careful and continual review and take into account all available information when making decisions on export licence applications. We are in contact with the US regarding the circumstances in which the US made its decision to halt a single specific export of precision guided munitions to Saudi Arabia. The US continues to export a wide range of military equipment to Saudi Arabia, including combat aircraft and attack helicopters and munitions.

We have our own robust evidence-based process and reach our own conclusions. As you have noted, we make an informed risk assessment in which the key test for continued UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia is whether there is a clear risk that the items subject to a licence might be used in a serious violation of IHL.

As the Defence Secretary said in the House on 19 December, we will continue to keep current sales of military equipment to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf allies under review, in accordance with our arms export criteria.

I am copying this letter to the Secretaries of State for International Trade,  
International Development and Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

*Yours ever*  
*Boris*

**THE RT HON BORIS JOHNSON MP**