

Stop Arming Saudi local campaign briefing: ‘Secretive’ UK to Saudi ML4 Exports

Written by Put Down the Sword, July 2018.

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- **Huge rise in sale of UK manufactured weapons to the Saudi Arabian military since the bombing of Yemen began in March 2015**
- **Freedom of Information Request reveals UK bombs and missiles are being quietly licensed to Saudi under opaque licensing system. Open sources estimate the value of these exports to be worth hundreds of millions of pounds.**
- **Key UK manufacturing sites listed in this briefing**

Campaign and media reports towards the end of 2017 reported large increases in the sale of; bombs, missiles and fighter jets by the UK to the Saudi military since the Saudi-led bombing of Yemen began in March 2015 <https://www.caat.org.uk/media/press-releases/2017-11-08> Members of Put Down the Sword (PDTs) began to analyse the available sources of data in more detail.

In January 2018 a member of the group looked through some of the UK government’s most recent Strategic Export Controls Licensing Data Quarterly Reports <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/strategic-export-controls-licensing-data#quarterly-reports> to see whether there were any new ML4 export licenses (which includes; bombs, missiles and countermeasures) issued for sales to the Saudi military.

Since the bombing begin in March 2015 the reports reveal frequent exports of bomb components. At present the total figure for exports of bomb components between September 2015 and March 2018 is over £104m. However, figures for complete bombs and air-to-surface missiles (ASMs) are where the reports become very murky.

Between the whole period 2008 to 2018 the reports show export values for bombs to Saudi occurring only between April and August 2015 and worth £14m in total, a figure nowhere near big enough to include Raytheon’s reported order of 2,400 Paveway IV guided bombs in 2014 valued at around £150m

<https://web.archive.org/web/20140327221355/http://www.janes.com/article/35968/saudi-arabia-becomes-first-paveway-iv-export-customer>

What was found to be missing altogether from all of the quarterly reports between 2008 and 2018 are export values that would indicate orders for air-to-surface missiles (ASMs) such as the British made Stormshadow (at around £800,000 per unit) and Brimstone (at around £100,000 per unit). So how is it that the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfer Database, <https://sipri.org/databases/armstransfers> lists estimated orders of Stormshadow and Brimstone ASMs on more than one occasion over the last decade?

It was noticed by another member of PDTs that some ML4 category items were possibly being exported on Open Individual Export Licences (OIELs) rather than Single Individual Export Licences (SIELs) which were previously standard practice until around 2013. According to a recent House of Commons Arms Export Control report, paragraph 27, OIELs “...are for less sensitive

goods to less sensitive destinations...”

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmquad/666/666.pdf>

which raises alarm bells when OIELs are being used to send bombs to a country with an appalling human rights record.

The group contacted a researcher at CAAT who had also noticed the lack of SIELs for ASMs in the UK government’s data and increasing use of OIELs. CAAT were of an understanding that OIELs lasted only for 2-years, so based on the dates that the OIEL’s were issued for ASMs (one on the 5th of December 2013 and another the 21st of August 2014) <https://www.caat.org.uk/resources/export-licences/licence?type=OIEL®ion=Saudi+Arabia&item=air-to-surface+missiles> it was in one way plausible to assume that there were no currently active licences for ASMs.

The researcher submitted a Freedom of Information Request (FOI) with the Department for International Trade to clarify whether any British made bombs and missiles were being sold to Saudi and under what license (see results below)

The increasing use of OIELs and their secretive nature was beginning to be noticed by a small portion of the media in Spring 2018 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/exclusive-huge-rise-britains-secret-arms-sales-saudi-arabia-2114276785>

In the mean time the researcher at CAAT got back in touch to inform us that an order for 1,000 Brimstone missiles that had been taken down from the SIPRI Arms Transfer database had, following further information received by SIPRI, been returned as an order in 2017. Based on that information PDTS and other activists staged a creative ‘weapons inspection’ protest at the Roxel factory near Kidderminster

http://www.kidderminstershuttle.co.uk/news/16152530.Anti_war_demonstrators_blockade_Hartlebury_rockets_factory/ Roxel manufacture propulsion systems for both the Brimstone and Stormshadow missiles which are assembled by MBDA at different sites around Britain.

The results of the FOI request became available in June followed by an article in the Guardian on the 23rd of June 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/23/uk-hides-arms-trade-saudi-arabia--yemen> which confirms the following -

- “...for the last five years, Britain has been selling Stormshadow and Brimstone air-to-surface missiles and Paveway IV bombs to the Saudis under what are known as Open Individual Export Licences (OIELs), which the government says are for the export of “less sensitive goods”.” The table of data from the FOI request (below) shows each of the three relevant licences as “extant” (still in existence)

Application Type	Licensee	End User Countries	Goods Annual Report Summary	Goods Rating	Weapon type	Case Closed Reason	Case Closed Datetime	Licence Status
OIEL (Military / Dual Use)	BAE SYSTEMS (OPERATIONS) LIMITED	Saudi Arabia	air-to-surface missiles	ML4a	Storm Shadow	COMPLETED	05/12/2013	Extant
OIEL (Military / Dual Use)	BAE SYSTEMS (OPERATIONS) LIMITED	Saudi Arabia	bombs	ML4a	Paveway	COMPLETED	05/03/2014	Extant
OIEL (Military / Dual Use)	BAE SYSTEMS (OPERATIONS) LIMITED	Saudi Arabia	air-to-surface missiles	ML4a	Brimstone	COMPLETED	21/08/2014	Extant
SIEL (Permanent)	Defence Equipment & Support	Saudi Arabia	bombs	ML4a	Paveway	COMPLETED	09/04/2015	Expired

- OIELs now last typically for 3 to 5 years, not 2, and allow an unlimited number of exports within that set period. The monetary value of any exports made under OIELs are not published.

- The Guardian article reaffirms the information already openly available on the SIPRI Arms Transfer Database which since 2013 reveals estimated UK to Saudi orders of; “...around 100 British-made Stormshadow missiles worth £80m, 2,400 Paveway IV bombs worth £150m, and 1,000 Brimstone missiles worth £100m”.
- The Guardian article reaffirms what has previously been reported, that the use of all three weapon systems in Yemen has been confirmed by the UK government, two of which have already been linked to attack sites by human rights groups and the media. Human Rights Watch have linked the Paveway IV bomb to attacks in civilian areas <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/11/bombing-businesses/saudi-coalition-airstrikes-yemens-civilian-economic-structures> and a Sky news report revealed the finding of a Stormshadow nose cone <https://news.sky.com/story/yemens-rebel-pm-accuses-uk-of-war-crimes-with-saudi-arms-sales-10693334>

UK arming Saudi ML4 production sites:-

The following is a list of sites which might currently be manufacturing ML4 category weapons for UK exports to Saudi -

(for a more comprehensive map of sites involved in all categories of UK weapons export to Saudi, please see: <https://www.caat.org.uk/campaigns/stop-arming-saudi/a-shameful-relationship.pdf>)

Raytheon

Raytheon UK, Queensway Industrial Estate, Glenrothes, Fife KY7 5PY

Manufactures and assembles the Paveway IV guided bomb which is a Lockheed Martin MK82 bomb integrated into a ‘GAINS’ guidance system kit

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/2016/10/17/uk-supplied-precision-weapons-prove-popular-in-saudi-led-yemen-campaign/>

MBDA

Six Hills Way, Stevenage, Herts SG1 2DA

Lostock Lane, Bolton, Lancashire BL6 4BR

Bedford Road, Henlow, Bedfordshire SG16 6EB

Manufactures Brimstone and Stormshadow missiles

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/2016/10/17/uk-supplied-precision-weapons-prove-popular-in-saudi-led-yemen-campaign/>

Roxel

Summerfield DY11 7RZ

Manufactures propulsion systems (rocket engines) for Brimstone and Stormshadow missiles

<https://www.caat.org.uk/resources/mapping/organisation/6942>

EDO MBM (now owned by Harris)

Home Farm Business Park, Emblem House, Brighton BN1 9HU

Originally listed as supplying various Paveway IV components

<https://www.thinkdefence.co.uk/uk-complex-weapons/paveway-iv/>

<https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/my-pgm-for-a-fuze-paveway-iv-hits-trouble-in-britain-03644/>

Portsmouth Aviation

Airport Service Road, Portsmouth PO3 5PF

Originally listed as supplying the Paveway IV tail and transport containers

<https://www.thinkdefence.co.uk/uk-complex-weapons/paveway-iv/>

<https://www.defensenews.com/air/2017/04/13/paveway-iv-leads-uk-investment-in-munitions-replenishment-for-anti-isis-fight/>

<https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/my-pgm-for-a-fuze-paveway-iv-hits-trouble-in-britain-03644/>