

# Export Controls — Canada and Internationally

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## **5.** What are export controls and why do they exist?

Countries take shared action on many issues of common concern. For example:

- The United Nations invokes wide-ranging trade sanctions against countries whose actions threaten international peace and stability.
- Many countries co-operate to fight illegal drug trafficking and to prevent the spread of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

Export controls are one essential way that Canada implements its international obligations and supports these and other international efforts. Export controls are designed to prevent or regulate the movement of certain goods by controlling sources of supply. They create a consistent approach that responsible supplier countries can support and implement. Shared export control structures create an international standard that also leads to positive “peer pressure” among countries to maintain, enforce and improve their national export controls.

Goods specially designed for military use are one such category of goods. They are controlled (or regulated) because the international community understands that an excessive accumulation of conventional arms, and especially advanced weapons, can destabilize regional and global security. Most countries accept that legitimate customers should generally be able to buy military goods, but also that responsible members of the international community should act cautiously where doubts or concerns may exist. An even more restrictive set of export controls underpins international agreements on weapons of mass destruction and related technologies.

Canada has helped to forge the key international mechanisms that form the basis for today’s common approaches on the export of military goods. The countries that share these goals put measures in place that enable and oblige them to review, and sometimes prevent, proposed exports of military goods. This leads to a relatively consistent international framework for governments and a level playing field for exporters.