

Government Orders

The amendments to the Criminal Code will correct this situation. However, the prohibition on the general sale to civilians of automatic weapons in Canada will remain unchanged as was established back in 1978.

As chairman of the special committee on Bill C-80 on firearms, I can say that nothing we are doing in these amendments, either now or during the previous session, will in any way frustrate the new gun control bill that was also introduced and tabled in the House this morning. I have to make it very clear that they are two separate issues. This bill deals with the export of weapons, while the other bill on gun control concerns Canadian civilians. Canadian Armed Forces and police always had an exemption from the prohibition that applied to all civilians in Canada.

Mr. Brewin: What about the Saudi police, are they okay?

Mr. Reimer: The hon. member likes to speak from his seat. I did not interrupt him. I would wish that he would not interrupt me.

The new gun control bill tabled by the Minister of Justice this morning will deal with civilians in Canada. This bill will deal with exporting weapons that are not available to civilians in Canada. That is the important difference we have to keep in mind.

Also, Canada is the only NATO country which prohibits exports of automatic firearms to its allies and defence partners. If the tables were reversed, our defence requirements would suffer and we would protest to our allies. It is ludicrous that Canadian firms can export rockets, missiles, bombs, F-18 aircraft, in fact any defence equipment, but they may not export automatic firearms to our NATO allies and close defence partners.

That is the only restriction and that is the one we are addressing today in this bill. This restriction which came about in the 1977-78 gun control amendments for civilian use, not Armed Forces use, never was intended to restrict companies such as Diemaco in their exports or their hopes to export to our NATO allies and defence partners.

I discussed this with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce who is here this morning. I am glad he is here. I asked him if, when he was minister and introduced the bill back in 1976 for gun control in Canada, it was the

intention in his bill—which later was taken by another minister to fruition two years later—and if it was ever the intention of the government through him as the minister at that time, to stop exports to our defence partners or NATO allies of fully automatic weapons. His answer was no, he did not think that in any way that was ever intended. It was an oversight.

That is fine. That is the history. That is where we have come from. Today we are correcting that oversight and that is all we are doing today.

This issue has been before me for six years, since 1984. When I was elected as the member for the federal riding of Kitchener this company came to me and said: "We've discussed this with the former administration and it has admitted to us that it was an oversight. Please take our representation to the government and see if we can make this change". This change was almost accomplished in 1987, but for a variety of reasons it was deferred. Now we are facing it again. I am glad that we have now finally bit the bullet and said: "Let's face the question and let's act on this issue".

I think it is necessary to put this action into the full range of foreign policy and international security considerations as well, not just within our own domestic question with respect to gun control.

All the production facilities in Canada must meet rigorous Department of National Defence and the Department of Supply and Services security standards and all are subject to regular inspection. All exports and imports of automatic weapons will continue to be tightly controlled and will be subject to the same stringent controls long applied to all exports of military goods.

Exports of all fully automatic weapons will be permitted only to those countries on the Automatic Firearm Country Control List, which will include only those countries with which Canada has concluded intergovernmental defence, research, development and, production arrangements.

In the international arena the government is seeking support for proposals to increase controls on the world arms trade, in particular exports which contribute to programs to develop weapons of mass destruction. We are also working at the United Nations to encourage greater transparency in arms transfers through the establishment of an international arms transfer register. In a unilateral effort to bring greater transparency to