

Bill C-6 Allows Restricted Export of Automatic Weapons

Parliamentary committee to study Canadian arms export policy

A bill passed by the House of Commons in June provides for the severely-restricted import, possession and export of automatic weapons for certain narrowly-defined military and related industrial purposes. Bill C-6 removes an anomaly in the Criminal Code that has effectively prevented Canadian defence firms from manufacturing automatic weapons for our NATO allies and close defence partners. As well, it establishes a new Automatic Firearms Country Control List on which any prospective recipient of Canadian automatic weapons must first be placed.

In passing the bill, the government and opposition parties mandated the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade to study and report on Canadian arms export and defence production policies. The Committee will hold public hearings and submit its report by December 31, 1991.

Until the Parliamentary report is completed, the government will include on the Automatic Firearms Country Control List only those ten countries with which it already has the required bilateral defence research, development and production agreements. It will also include Saudi Arabia, assuming the required agreements can be successfully negotiated by the end of the year. No Canadian export of automatic weapons to Saudi Arabia will be permitted before the end of the year, except of those mounted on light armoured vehicles under a proposed sale by General Motors.

The following are excerpts of an address by the Honourable Michael Wilson, Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade, to the House of Commons during debate on second reading of Bill C-6 on May 30.

Under present law, alone among Canada's few manufacturers of military materiel, our producers of automatic firearms and related equipment are effectively prevented from competing on a level playing field, even in that small part of the international market to

which Canadian foreign policy would quite properly limit their access.

As things stand now, these firms can manufacture such equipment only for the Canadian military or police. They may not even produce for Canada's allies and closest defence partners, while foreign firms are at liberty to sell to Canada's armed forces. The restrictions put Canadian companies at an unnecessary disadvantage and threaten the viability of some. They could eventually preclude Canada from meeting its own future requirements for weapons.

Introducing carefully-defined new flexibility to permit exports of automatic firearms to our NATO allies and close defence partners will demonstrate Canada's commitment to meeting its own requirements for basic defence products from Canadian sources. It will also enhance Canada's contribution to joint allied preparedness, most notably its role in the North American defence industrial base.

As everyone in this House knows, Canada's role in UN peacekeeping is long-standing and widely respected. Imagine Canada's peacekeeping forces in country "x." Could they do their job without the appropriate weapons? And if our troops were there side-by-side with other UN peacekeeping forces, be they Swedish, Australian or whatever, would it be wrong for those Swedes or Australians to be armed with Canadian firearms? I think not.

Bill C-6 will place very tight controls on exports of automatic firearms from Canada by establishing a new Automatic Firearms Country Control List under the Export and Import Permits Act... The authority of the Secretary of State for External Affairs to approve permits for exports of automatic firearms will be limited to those countries listed on [the List]. Her authority to refuse inappropriate applications remains total and un-

diminished. The List is to include only those countries with which Canada has an intergovernmental defence research, development and production agreement... In keeping with the concern shared by most Canadians for restraining the arms trade, the required defence production arrangements will be concluded only with Canada's NATO allies and close defence partners. Those countries will be made known through the publication of the Automatic Firearms Country Control List... Sales will be permitted only to governments and acceptable designated consignees approved by the Canadian government. Sales to civilians will not be permitted.

Canada currently has defence production arrangements with ten countries, of which Sweden is the only one not a member of NATO. An arrangement with Spain is under negotiation... Proposals to include other countries on the List will be subject to an intense, case-by-case basis review to confirm that:

- the requirement for automatic firearms is legitimate and reasonable;
- defence cooperation with Canada will enhance regional cooperation and security; and
- the country being considered for defence cooperation does not threaten regional or world security,

Exports allowed only to countries on Automatic Firearms Country Control List. Inclusion on List does not guarantee export.

and does not maintain an excessive level of armaments...

A country's inclusion on the new control List does not in itself constitute authority to export automatic firearms to that country... Applications to export automatic firearms will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be subject to the same strict guidelines and licensing procedures applied to all exports of military goods from Canada... Certainly