

Government Orders

which Canada had a defence production agreement began to develop its military arsenal to the point of threatening its neighbours and regional security we would simply stop issuing export permits and suspend all outstanding ones.

• (1050)

Such action is within the discretionary authority by the Secretary of State for External Affairs provided for by the Export and Import Permits Act. It has been exercised in the past in response to changing security considerations and would be used in the future without hesitation if necessary. For example, no Canadian military goods were approved for export to Iraq after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, an indication that Canadian controls are applied and are effective.

Our intention is to control more effectively, not to prohibit, the sales of military equipment. Canada will be extremely careful in deciding which countries it should sell firearms to. We will also make known which military goods are exported and to which countries.

To conclude, the proposed amendments to the Export and Import Permits Act and the Criminal Code will create a framework for Canadian defence firms that will enable them to compete more effectively under very closely controlled conditions. Canada needs a strong defence industrial base to lower per-unit costs and ensure Canadian sources in times of emergency. With these amendments, Canadian firms will be better able to meet Canada's defence requirements and those of our NATO allies and defence partners.

Mr. Allmand: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am wondering if the minister would accept a technical question for clarification which I consider to be very important. Would he mind accepting such a question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There are no questions or comments but we could do it by unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, in the minister's speech he said that only those countries with which Canada has an intergovernmental

defence, research, development and production arrangement would be eligible for the automatic firearms country control list. I think he used the word "only". But in the text of the legislation in clause 2 on page 1 it says:

The Governor in Council may establish a list of countries to be called an Automatic Firearms Country Control List including therein any country with which Canada has an intergovernmental defence, research, development and production arrangement—

The wording of the text of the bill suggests that while you would include all those countries it would not be limited to those countries.

I wonder if the minister would clarify that because there is quite a difference. If it is as the minister said in his speech that the list is restricted to those countries, then I think that the text of the bill should be amended and I would support that. It would provide more control. But the way the text is written it seems to be contrary to what the minister said in his speech because it says those countries must be included. It does not say it is restricted to those countries.

If you look at the French text it seems closer to what the minister said and I think this is extremely important. Also on a technical point, Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the minister has already prepared such a proposed list and, if so, would he be willing during the debate to make it available to the House so we know exactly which countries he proposes to put on the list.

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I have a very quick question which the minister could perhaps answer at the same time as it flows from the same point. Are there any arrangements with Saudi Arabia? The minister has said that one of the purposes of this bill is to permit this particular deal with Saudi Arabia. Are there any arrangements with Saudi Arabia which the minister could tell us about, as we proceed with this debate, which fit within the definition set out in the act?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): There are two questions for the hon. minister. Under this section we will allow it this time, but let us not make it a precedent.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your comments with respect to the question from the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.