

17. What special precautions does Canada take to ensure that firearms are not illegally or inappropriately exported?

Canada is particularly concerned about the proliferation of small arms around the world. The Canadian government applies strict controls to firearms exports, especially exports of automatic firearms. These controls build on close co-operation among the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Department of Justice, Revenue Canada — Customs, and the RCMP.

Under Canadian regulations, automatic firearms can only be exported to 13 countries with which Canada has specific defence, research, development and production arrangements. Most are fellow members of NATO.

Most firearms above .22 calibre are covered on the International Munitions List. This means they are treated as controlled military goods, regardless of their normal use. Exporters of these products are subject to the same comprehensive policies, procedures and screening as exporters of all other military goods. This applies equally to:

- Canadian sporting goods retailers and wholesalers who may sell as little as one target shooting rifle, a few parts or some ammunition to an importer in a particular country;
- Canadians travelling abroad (e.g., on safari or for a competition) accompanied by their hunting rifles; and
- collectors who sell obsolete military firearms to fellow collectors.

To support these controls, the federal government normally requires proof of an import permit from the other country before issuing a Canadian export permit. This prevents an unauthorized firearm from falling into the black market, or simply being abandoned, if the import is refused.

These precautions will increase under Canada's new firearms control legislation, which will require the universal registration of all firearms in Canada by 2001 and establish new rules for commercial importers and exporters. An increased capacity to deter firearms smuggling supports both the new legislation and Canada's expanding international commitments to control firearms, such as a recent Organization of American States convention. Once in force, the OAS convention will require marking of firearms prior to import within the Americas. It also will require import and transit approval prior to export authorization, with streamlined treatment for hunters and similar recreational users.