

## UK Arms Dealer Sentenced for Smuggling

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A British arms dealer was sentenced to jail Oct. 26 for arms smuggling and tax fraud, the United Kingdom's tax agency said in a press statement.

Gary Hyde was found guilty of arranging the illegal shipment of 40,000 AK-47s, 30,000 rifles, 10,000 Makarov nine-millimeter pistols, and 32 million rounds of ammunition from China directly to Nigeria some time between March 2006 and December 2007, according to the tax agency, which brought the charges against him. He coordinated the purchase and shipment of the weapons through his company in the United Kingdom, the agency said.

According to the agency's statement, his conviction stemmed from his failure to acquire a license for the arms transfer, which violated a 2003 British law. Additionally, the statement said, Hyde hid his \$1 million commission from the deal in an offshore bank account in Liechtenstein, which resulted in a conviction for concealing criminal property.

The tax agency said in the statement that it established Hyde's involvement in the transaction through e-mail records and by using his cellphone's GPS data to establish that he was in the United Kingdom when he negotiated the deal, thereby making him subject to British arms export law.

In response to the verdict, Hyde's lawyer, Stephen Solley, said, "The idea Mr. Hyde sat down and made a decision to breach this law...knowing full well the consequences" is "ludicrous." He added, "There's nothing wrong with arms dealing," describing the deal as taking place between two countries.

In January, the original charges against Hyde were dropped by the presiding judge in the case because the 2003 law was replaced by a new version in 2009. But the case was taken up again by the Court of Appeals, which, in handing down the Oct. 26 verdict, ruled that Hyde was responsible for following the law that was in force at the time of the transaction.

Hyde is currently facing separate charges in the United States, where he stands accused of illegally exporting to the United States 5,000 Chinese-made AK-47 drum magazines capable of holding 75 rounds each, in violation of U.S. arms import laws. U.S. court documents accuse Hyde and his co-defendant Karl Kleber of fraudulently altering the markings on the drums to indicate that they were manufactured in Bulgaria.

According to news accounts, Hyde is the former owner of two British firearms companies, York Guns and Jago Ltd.

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