

Wassenaar Members Remain Divided on Arrangement's Scope

- [Arms Control Today](#)

THE WASSENAAR ARRANGEMENT held its fifth plenary meeting December 1-3 in Vienna with its 33 members still divided over whether the weapons and dual-use export transparency body should become more than simply a data collection center. While adding new reporting items to the munitions control list after a year-long review of the 1996 arrangement's functioning, most members, including the United States, saw efforts to strengthen the regime frustrated by a few countries. Russia has been the most resistant to changes.

Designed to promote transparency and "greater responsibility" in the world arms market, Wassenaar calls on its members—most major arms exporters, with the key exceptions of Brazil, China, Israel and South Africa—to voluntarily exchange information on exports of conventional weapons and dual-use goods to help prevent "destabilizing accumulations." The arrangement is also intended to enhance member cooperation in preventing the acquisition of weapons and sensitive dual-use goods and technologies by countries that are of concern to Wassenaar members. But the final decision to approve or deny an export remains solely at the exporter's discretion.

Every six months, Wassenaar members are requested to provide information on deliveries of tanks, armored combat vehicles (ACVs), large-caliber artillery, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships and missiles and missile systems to non-participating countries. Members may also voluntarily report on arms export denials.

The dual-use goods and technologies control list is broken down into two tiers of "basic" and "sensitive," with a sub-set of "very sensitive." For basic dual-use goods, members are asked only to report denials on an aggregate basis twice per year. Licenses granted or transfers made in the sensitive tier are to be reported every six months. If an export considered sensitive or very sensitive is denied, members are to notify other members of the denial within 60 days. Though other members are not obligated to forgo transfers denied by others, an exporter is expected to inform all other members within 60 days if it makes an export similar to one denied by another member during a three-year period.

As part of the year-long review of the arrangement's operation, individual members put forward more than 150 proposals for changes, including suggestions to increase arms trade transparency by adding small arms and power-projection equipment reporting categories, as well as provisions to increase exporter accountability. For its part, Washington pressed its 1998 initiative to bar the illicit possession of Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS), such as Stinger ground-to-air missiles. The list was eventually narrowed to some 50 items for consideration. Because Wassenaar operates by consensus, all members must agree or not object to a proposal for it to be approved.

In the end, members expanded the ACV reporting requirements to include those designed or equipped for reconnaissance, target indication, troop command and electronic warfare. Helicopters used in communications, troop command, target acquisition and mine-laying missions were incorporated into the attack helicopter category. While many countries wanted to make unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) a new category, a few countries objected. UAVs with military capabilities were therefore added to the combat aircraft category. Refueling aircraft and those with troop command and airdrop missions were also added. To reflect the broadening of the combat aircraft and attack helicopter categories, the category names were changed to "military aircraft/unmanned aerial vehicles" and "military and attack helicopters," respectively. The dual-use goods and technologies

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control list was also updated and amended.

Efforts to include a small arms category and to add ground-to-air missiles with ranges of less than 25 kilometers, which would include MANPADS, to the missiles category failed—the missile category currently excludes ground-to-air missiles. Members, however, pledged to study small arms and light weapons as a "matter of urgency" and to continue discussions for the "possible development of guidelines" for exporting MANPADS. A U.S. government official noted that "if Wassenaar was a majority vote institution, things would have been a lot different."

As in past years, Wassenaar observed in its plenary public statement that weapons continued to flow to regions of conflict, including to countries and parties subject to UN Security Council arms embargoes, though the statement did not name either the exporters or importers. Members, however, again reaffirmed they would act with "maximum restraint" when considering future arms and sensitive dual-use exports.

Frustrated that some states voluntarily report arms transfer denials and transfers previously denied by others, while some do not, members agreed to study the value of continuing the practice. U.S. unhappiness with Wassenaar became publicly evident when John Holum, senior advisor to the president for arms control and international security, listed Wassenaar as one of the disappointments of 1999 in a December 9 briefing at the Foreign Press Center in Washington, D.C.

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