



The Wassenaar Arrangement

At a Glance

The [Wassenaar Arrangement \(WA\)](#) is a voluntary multilateral export control regime that provides members a space to exchange information regarding exports of sensitive conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies in hopes of preventing the proliferation of such items. It was formed in 1996 as the successor to the Cold War-era Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM) and currently has [42 participating members](#).

Overview

Member states of the WA [provide semiannual reports](#) on transfers and denials to non-members of weapons in categories from the UN Register of Conventional arms and of dual-use goods from the Wassenaar Dual-Use List. The goal of the information exchanges within the WA is to promote transparency, responsibility and accountability among members with regard to sensitive materials. This transparency allows members to avoid destabilizing accumulations of arms and dual-use goods and technologies by any state, particularly those of concern. The Wassenaar Dual-Use List contains a Basic List of controlled technology, which is subdivided into a Sensitive List, and further subdivided into a Very Sensitive List. Members report semiannually on license denials from the Basic List and within 30-60 days of denials and semiannually on transfers from the Sensitive List. Transfers of items from the Very Sensitive List are subject to extreme discretion in licensing decisions.

Its predecessor, COCOM, [was formed](#) as a Cold War-era measure to implement stricter regulations on exports going to the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc and was disbanded in 1994 before the formation of the WA. Unlike COCOM, the WA does not specifically target any state or region, but is more geopolitically neutral. Despite this, members generally have common understandings to more strictly limit transfers going to states of concern, like Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea to prevent their accumulation of arms and sensitive materials.

Membership Obligations

To be members, states must produce and export arms or associated dual-use technologies. They also must implement national export control laws that prohibit the sale of arms or sensitive dual-use goods to areas of concern. Members are expected to behave in accordance with international non-proliferation norms and standards, like the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#), the [Missile Technology Control Regime \(MTCR\)](#), the [Chemical Weapons Convention \(CWC\)](#), and the [UN Register of Conventional Arms](#).

WA members are also expected to maintain export controls based on the control lists of the WA: [the Munitions List and the Dual-Use List](#). Experts of member states regularly review and update these lists; however, the decision to approve or deny controlled items is up to individual states. Unlike COCOM, the WA does not have a no undercut rule, meaning if one member state denies a transfer, another member may approve it. Similar to COCOM, the WA does not have any vetoes of proposed exports and does not have prior reviews of proposed exports on a case-by-case basis.

Russian membership has proven controversial. On one hand, it allows the international community some transparency on export activity, but Russia's participation has not led to the expected improvement in Russian behavior in approving exports to unstable regions. Russia has also obstructed updates to control lists on occasion and has tended to treat information exchanges as intelligence gathering opportunities, leading others to question if Russian participation is actually in line with the goals of the arrangement.

Israel, China and Belarus, three major arms control exporters, are notable non-members.