

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 5th, 2018

Secretary Mike Pompeo
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20230

Secretary Wilbur Ross
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretaries Pompeo and Ross:

We write to express our deep concern about proposed regulatory changes that would transfer control and licensing of exports of semi-automatic assault weapons, high capacity ammunition magazines and related military items from the Department of State to the Department of Commerce. We urge you to postpone implementation of these proposed changes until important issues can be addressed.

Under the current regulatory framework established under the Arms Export Control Act, export of items that are primarily for military use are regulated pursuant to the International Traffic in Arms Regulations administered by the State Department. Such items are included on United States Munitions List and are subject to stringent controls that are aimed at restricting access to military items to approved foreign governments. Exporters must be registered with the State Department and end-users are monitored under the Blue Lantern program, which provides inventory management control and accountability of all commercial arms sales and transfers. Transferring regulation of such military exports to the Department of Commerce would make it more likely that U.S.-origin weapons will end up in the hands of traffickers, terrorists, and cartels, and put them into global commerce.

We are also concerned that proposed rule changes will significantly reduce Congressional oversight and undermine efforts to prevent and prosecute firearms trafficking. Specifically, current regulations require Congressional notification of an intended commercial firearms sale in excess of \$1 million. By contrast, licenses issued by the Commerce Department are not notified to the Congress, or subject to prior review. In addition, the Foreign Assistance Act also prohibits sale of such defense articles to countries where governments have engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.

The volume of U.S. military small arms exports, which is already substantial, is certain to increase if regulation is moved to the Commerce Department. In the past year alone, Congress has

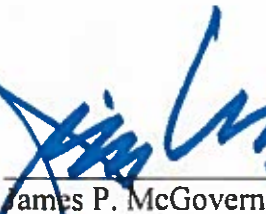
been notified of some \$660 million of firearms sales regulated under the United States Munitions List

The ramifications of the proposed transfer of oversight from the State Department to the Commerce Department are very serious: arms manufacturers and brokers of semi-automatic assault weapons will no longer be required to register with the State Department; training on the use of these items will no longer require a license, allowing private security contractors to train foreign militias in sensitive combat techniques without proper vetting; prosecutors will have less documentary evidence to prosecute arms dealers; and elected officials will have less say in the export of dangerous weapons.

For all these reasons, we urge you to postpone the proposed regulatory transfer until these important issues can be addressed.


Sander Levin


Eliot Engel


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Norma J. Torres


Jamie Raskin