

Follow-up audit of recommendations on the control of the transfer of war material

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

Key facts

Between 2017 and 2018, the Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) audited the control of the transfer of war material at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)¹, resulting in a number of recommendations. As part of this follow-up audit, the SFAO audited the implementation of the first three recommendations. It noted that two of them remain outstanding. In addition, SECO has strengthened its company audits and has drawn up a concept for information flows.

No decision in principle on an export licence application has been made since 2018

The first recommendation, which was submitted to the Federal Council, was that decisions in principle on the practice of interpreting federal legislation on war material should be made public. In its position statement, the Federal Council indicated that, on 15 June 2018, it had asked the General Secretariat of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research to present proposals on the publication of these decisions.

As no decision in principle on an application for a licence to export war material has been taken by the Federal Council since June 2018, the SFAO is unable to assess the implementation of this recommendation.

The number of company audits of the SECO has increased

The SFAO had recommended to SECO that it perform more audits at companies actively engaged in the transfer of war material, and that it adopt a risk-based approach for this purpose. Since 2018, SECO has significantly increased the number of audits. In addition, it has developed a concept for these audits which includes risk assessment. The SFAO therefore considers that the recommendation has been implemented.

A summary concept for pooling information has been developed

The third recommendation was for SECO to develop a concept aimed at pooling and evaluating information received from the various partners within the Federal Administration, and then transferring to the Federal Customs Administration, in order for it to target its checks.

An information pooling concept has been drawn up. However, it contains no details on how the information received from the partners is evaluated, nor does it describe the criteria that would lead to a company being reported to Customs. The SFAO considers that the recommendation has been only partly implemented. It therefore remains outstanding.

Original text in French

¹ The report for audit mandate 17425 is available on the SFAO's website (www.sfao.admin.ch).