



Ministry  
of Defence

**Michael Gwyther**  
DE&S Policy Secretariat Air

Defence Equipment and Support  
Maple 0a #2043  
MOD Abbey Wood South  
Bristol BS34 8JH

Tel: 0117 913 0204



---

Your Reference:

Our Reference:  
25-06-2013-144550-013  
Date: 23 July 2013

---

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 25 June 2013 where you requested the following information:

- 1. How much funding has the UK government provided to Thales UK since 2004 for the development, manufacturer and support of the Watchkeeper programme?*
- 2. How much of that funding was allocated to Elbit Systems - (Thales UK partner in UAV Tactical Systems)?*
- 3. Has there been any objection/concerns raised by another member of government or parliament relating to the role of Elbit Systems in the Watchkeeper programme? Please provide documentation of any objections/concerns.*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and I can confirm that information in scope of your request is held.

The value of the contract between the MOD and Thales UK for the Development, Manufacture and Initial Support (DMIS) and Contractor Logistic Support (CLS) of the Watchkeeper Unmanned Air System is £775 million.

Since the award of the Watchkeeper contract in 2005, a number of Members of Parliament have raised questions about the involvement of Thales UK's sub-contractor, Elbit Systems. This information is exempt under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act, because it is reasonably accessible to you by other means. It is already in the public domain at: <http://www.parliament.uk/>.

Nevertheless, for your convenience, a copy of relevant questions tabled in both Houses of Parliament is attached at Annex A.

No other objections or concerns are known to have been raised.

The MOD does not hold information on the value of Thales UK's contract with Elbit Systems or that with UAV Tactical Systems Ltd, the joint venture company owned by Elbit Systems and Thales.

**Defence Equipment & Support**

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Deputy Chief Information Officer, 2nd Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours Sincerely,

Mike Gwyther

23 May 2006 : Column 1607W

### Elbit

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he made of the ethical credentials of Elbit prior to awarding the UK Watchkeeper contract to the company. [71498]

**Mr. Ingram:** None. The contract for the demonstration and manufacture phase of the Watchkeeper programme was awarded to Thales UK in July 2005. Elbit is a sub-contractor selected by Thales UK for the supply of the air vehicle. The company is also a partner with Thales UK in a joint venture to provide major subsystems for Watchkeeper, also through a sub-contract let and managed by Thales UK.

---

14 Jun 2011 : Column 683W

### Israel: Guided Weapons

**Dr Huppert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice his Department has (a) sought and (b) received on the implications of the Missile Technology Control Regime for the import of Watchkeeper unmanned aerial vehicles and associated technology from Israel. [59102]

**Peter Luff:** Where necessary the Ministry of Defence consults with other Government Departments on the implications that international agreements may have on our acquisition programmes. In this case there are no implications for the import of the Watchkeeper system to the United Kingdom. The Watchkeeper system is classed as a Category II system in that it does not have the ability to carry a 500 kg payload to a distance of at least 300 km. Exports of Category II systems are permitted under Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) guidelines in accordance with national export licensing arrangements.

14 Jun 2011 : Column 684W

Israel states that it voluntarily adheres to MTCR guidelines despite not being a member. In this context it is therefore Israel's responsibility to have made an assessment of the Watchkeeper system against MTCR controls before approving its export.

---

23 Apr 2012 : Column WA292

#### *Question Asked by Baroness Tonge*

To ask Her Majesty's Government which companies in Israel supply them with unmanned aerial vehicles. [HL16683]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence (Lord Astor of Hever):** No Israeli company directly supplies unmanned air systems (UAS) to the Ministry of Defence. The Hermes 450 UAS is operated by the British Army under a service provision contract awarded to Thales UK in 2007. Elbit Systems, a company based in Israel, provides the UAS assets to Thales UK.

**23 Apr 2012 : Column WA293**

Thales UK is also the prime contractor for the Watchkeeper system, which will replace the Hermes 450. UAV Tactical Systems Ltd., a joint venture company owned by Elbit Systems and Thales, provides the Watchkeeper air vehicle under a sub-contract from Thales UK.

---

**19 Nov 2012 : Column 231W**

### **Elbit Systems**

**Mr Godsiff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role Elbit Systems play in (a) the Joint Venture Company set up with Thales UK and (b) the overall development of Unmanned Air Systems in the UK. [126962]

**Mr Dunne:** The role of Elbit Systems in Unmanned Air Vehicle Tactical Systems Limited is a matter for the companies concerned.

With regards to Ministry of Defence unmanned air systems (UAS) programmes, Elbit Systems acts as a subcontractor to Thales UK and provides the air vehicles, related ground control technology and operator training for the in-service Hermes 450 UAS. The Watchkeeper UAS, which will replace Hermes, builds on technological expertise developed for the Hermes system, with Elbit Systems acting as subcontractor to Thales UK for the provision of the air vehicles and related ground control.