



Notice to Importers 2922 issued on 16 July 2019 by Import Licensing Branch (ILB), Queensway House, West Precinct, Billingham TS23 2NF.

IMPORTS OF FIREARMS & AMMUNITION IMPORT LICENSING ARRANGEMENTS 2017

This Notice sets out the licensing arrangements for imports of firearms and ammunition into the UK. It replaces all previous Notices to Importers on this issue. It has been updated to include two new section 5 categories – section 5(1)(ag) and section 5(1)(ba) and revised rules on the import of deactivated firearms.

Import licensing controls

1. Imports of firearms, essential component parts of firearms, ammunition and any accessory to any such firearm or other weapon designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the weapon manufactured after 31 December 1899 and classified to Chapter 93 or 97 of the tariff require an import licence. There are exemptions so please read this notice carefully.
2. Firearms manufactured on or before 31 December 1899 do not require an import licence. However the onus of proof is on you. If the date of manufacture of a firearm is disputed and you cannot prove the date of manufacture to the satisfaction of the import authorities, then that firearm will be considered to be subject to import licensing controls. The date of first manufacture of a type of firearm is not proof of the date of manufacture of the actual firearm being imported.

Definition of a firearm or airsoft weapon

3. A 'firearm' is defined as a "lethal barrelled weapon" of any description from which a shot, bullet or other missile, with a kinetic energy of more than 1 joule at the muzzle of the weapon can be discharged.
4. Airsoft weapons are not considered to be firearms if they are:
 - Single shot barrelled weapons designed to discharge only small plastic or part-plastic spherical missiles of a maximum diameter of 8mm, firing with a maximum kinetic energy of 2.5 joules
 - Barrelled weapons capable of firing two or more missiles successively without repeated pressure on the trigger, designed to discharge only small plastic or part-plastic spherical missiles of a maximum diameter of 8mm, firing with a maximum kinetic energy of 1.3 joules.
5. Airsoft weapons designed or adapted to discharge other missiles including airsoft darts are not considered to be airsoft weapons. They are considered to be firearms.

Importing firearms subject to possession controls in the UK

6. The controls on firearms possession are administered by the Police and the Home Office in England and Wales; the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland, and by the Police Scotland and the Scottish Government in Scotland. Where firearms are subject to domestic possession controls, you can only import it if you have authority under the relevant firearms legislation to possess it.
7. The authorities allowing possession and acquisition of firearms, component parts of firearms and ammunition are:
 - A Home Office section 5 authority.
 - A Certificate of Registration as a Firearms Dealer issued by your local police constabulary.
 - A Firearm Certificate issued by your local police constabulary.
 - A Shotgun Certificate issued by your local police constabulary.
 - A valid Deactivated Firearm Certificate issued by the Birmingham or London Proof House.

Importing Section 5 firearms and ammunition

8. The items listed in the table below can only be imported if you have a Section 5 authority issued by the Home Office. In most cases, a Registered Firearms Dealer Certificate issued by the Police will also be required. If the Section 5 firearm is for use in animal welfare or starting races at athletic meetings your

suitably conditioned Firearm Certificate can be used to apply for an import licence instead of a Section 5 authority. Please see 27 for guidance on expanding ammunition.

Firearms Act – Section 5 descriptions	
5(1)(a)	Any firearm capable of burst- or fully automatic fire and component parts of these.
5(1)(ab)	Any semi-automatic, self-loading or pump action rifled gun and carbines but not pistols
5(1)(aba)	Any firearm with a barrel less than 30 cm long or which is less than 60 cm long overall – short firearms (pistols and revolvers) and component parts of these.
5(1)(ac)	Any pump-action or self-loading shotgun with a barrel less than 24 inches long or which is less than 40 inches long overall.
5(1)(ad)	Any smoothbore revolver gun except 9mm rim fire or muzzle loaded.
5(1)(ae)	Any rocket launcher or mortar which fires a stabilised missile other than for line throwing, pyrotechnics or signalling.
5(1)(af)	Any firearm using a self-contained gas cartridge system.
5(1)(ag)	Any rifle with a chamber from which empty cartridge cases are extracted using: (i) energy from propellant gas, or (ii) energy imparted to a spring or other energy storage device by propellant gas, other than a rifle which is chambered for .22 rim-fire cartridges.
5(1)(b)	Any weapon designed or adapted to discharge noxious liquid, gas or other thing.
5(1)(ba)	Any device (commonly known as a bump stock) which is designed or adapted so that: (i) it is capable of forming part of or being added to a self-loading lethal barrelled weapon (as defined in section 57(1B) and (2A)), and (ii) if it forms part of or is added to such a weapon, it increases the rate of fire of the weapon by using the recoil from the weapon to generate repeated pressure on the trigger.
5(1)(c)	Any cartridge with an explosive bullet or any ammo designed to discharge any noxious thing (as described above) and if capable of being used with a firearm of any description, any grenade, bomb or other like missile, rocket or shell designed to explode
5(1A)(a)	Disguised firearms and component parts of these.
5(1A)(b)	Explosive rockets or ammunition not covered in 5(1)(c)
5(1A)(c)	Any launcher or projector not covered in 5(1)(ae) designed to fire any rocket or ammunition covered by 5(1A)(b) or 5(1)(c).
5(1A)(d)	Incendiary ammunition.
5(1A)(e)	Armour-piercing ammunition.
5(1A)(f)	Expanding ammunition for use with pistols and revolvers.
5(1A)(g)	Expanding, explosive, armour-piercing or incendiary projectiles.

Section 5 Handguns derogation – Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man

9. Although most handguns are prohibited weapons in mainland Britain, this is not the case in Northern Ireland or the Isle of Man. The personal import requirements apply to individuals who are based in Northern Ireland or the Isle of Man who want to import a handgun.
10. Commercial Imports of handguns consigned to Northern Ireland or the Isle of Man from outside of the European Union can be imported with a valid import licence. For the purposes of these arrangements the Isle of Man is regarded as part of the UK.
11. Handguns imported into Northern Ireland or the Isle of Man requires a transfer licence if being shipped to another EU Member State. The transfer licence must accompany the handguns throughout the transit to the final destination. You do not need an import licence in addition to the transfer licence. If any part of the journey is through Great Britain a Section 5 authorised carrier must be used.

Open Individual Import Licence

12. An Open Individual Import Licence (OIIL) allows you to import unlimited quantities of Section 1 & 2 firearms, their component parts, and ammunition from non-EU countries. You must be a Registered Firearms Dealer (RFD) to apply. OIILs are available for firearms falling to Chapters 93 or 97 of the tariff. You will need a Chapter 97 OIIL if you are importing firearms over 100 years old but manufactured after 1899. You must choose the correct commodity code group when applying for an OIIL. OIIL are given the same expiry date as your RFD Certificate.

13.

Firearms Act	Descriptions
Section 1	Bolt, lever, Winchester and Martini single action rifles
	Self-loading rifles chambered for .22 rim-fire cartridges
	Pump-action or semi-automatic shot guns with a barrel length of not less than 24 inches (60cms) and a magazine capacity of more than 2 rounds .
	Guns designed to be loaded at the muzzle end of the barrel or chamber with a loose charge and a separate ball or other missile (for example reproduction black powder muskets, pistols and revolvers)
	Air and compressed carbon dioxide (CO2) powered rifles designed to be fired from the shoulder with a kinetic energy of more than 12 foot pounds (16.3 joules); and flares incorporating a barrel, other than pen launchers.
	Expanding ammunition for firearms other than pistols and revolvers.
	Ammunition for rifled firearms that is neither expanding, armour piercing nor incendiary
Section 2	Double and single barrelled shot guns fitted with a barrel not less than 24 inches (60cms)
	Semi-automatic or pump action shotguns with a magazine capacity of no more than 2 cartridges.

Shipments of live firearms, firearms component parts and ammunition to the UK from within the EU

14. All shipments of firearms from the EU to the UK require a transfer licence issued by the transferring Member State. An import licence is required only for the shipment of live Section 5 firearms and their component parts or ammunition into the UK from within the EU. All other firearms may be transferred into the UK using your Firearm or Shotgun Certificates in lieu of an import licence plus the transfer licence.
15. An import licence will be issued if a transfer licence is not being issued by the exporting Member State. You must make this clear on any import licence request via the 'Firearms Licence for' 'Other' tick box.
16. A European Firearms Pass and a British Visitors Permit are required for temporary transfers by EU residents of firearms to the UK.

Non-commercial imports of firearms, their components and ammunition

17. An import licence is not required for the temporary or permanent import from outside the EU of your own firearms listed on a Firearm Certificate, Shotgun Certificate or a British Visitors Permit (BVP) as long as your domestic authority is presented and the firearm freely declared to Customs at the UK Border. This includes weapons such as sporting shotguns, hunting rifles, certain air weapons, black powder pistols, their component parts and standard ammunition that is neither expanding (only applies to calibres which can only be used in pistols), incendiary or armour piercing.

Declaring your personal import

18. If you are travelling with your firearm, you should go to the Red Point or Red Point telephone at the Port or Airport on arrival to make your declaration. Pre-warning the Port or Airport of your arrival may speed up the time taken to check your authority.
19. If you are returning with a newly acquired firearm or shotgun you must check:
 - Your airline or ferry company's policy on the transport of such items,
 - That you are in full compliance with the laws in the country where you purchase the item concerning its possession, transport and export,
 - You have your UK domestic possession authority to present to UK Customs.
20. If your item is being shipped or posted from a non-EU country, it must have a declaration on the package that clearly identifies its contents. Your item will then be held by UK Border Force whilst the validity of your domestic possession authorities is confirmed with the issuing constabulary. Your item will only be released when UKBF are satisfied that the correct authorities are in place.
21. If you are transferring a newly acquired firearm or shotgun into the UK from an EU country, you must obtain a transfer licence (irrespective of whether you are returning from a trip with the item or having it shipped to you). The transfer licence is issued by the relevant authority in the transferring Member State.

Applying for an import licence

22. You can apply for an import licence at www.ilb.trade.gov.uk. You will need to register yourself and then make an importer access request. Once we have completed our checks your account will be opened and you can apply for an import licence. Screen shot guidance on registration and applying for import licences is

available on the registration screen. Import licences are issued with a validity period of six months from the date of issue or up to the expiry date of any domestic authority if earlier. Longer validity period can be requested providing a valid reason is offered.

23. There are three types of import licence:

- Deactivated Firearms Licence – see 31.
- Open Individual Import Licence (OIIL) – see 12.
- Specific Individual Import Licence – you can use this licence to apply for section 5 firearms, firearms exempt from control under section 58(2) of the Firearms Act (e.g. obsolete calibre) and firearms falling outside of EU transfer requirements.

“Obsolete Calibre” firearms

24. Firearms which use centrefire ammunition that the Home Office have defined as an “obsolete calibre” require an import licence if manufactured after 31 December 1899 regardless of whether authority to possess it is required in the UK. You must check with the Police if you require clarification on whether your firearm is of an obsolete calibre or not. Obsolete calibre does not apply to firearms whose original chambering has been changed.

Section 58(2) of the Firearms Act

25. An import licence is required if a s58(2) firearm was manufactured after 31 December 1899. You must check with the Police as to whether the firearm in question is exempt from control under s58(2) of the Firearms Act and if you comply with the required conditions. Here is a link to Home Office guidance on firearms licensing law: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/firearms-law-guidance-to-the-police-2012>.

Component parts of firearms

26. The following require an import licence as they are the only parts that meet the definition of a component part of a firearm as per the Firearms Act 1968, as amended: a barrel, chamber or cylinder, a frame, body or receiver, a breech block, bolt or other mechanism for containing the pressure of discharge at the rear of the chamber. A Firearm or Shotgun Certificate is required to import component parts of all firearms except those falling to Section 5(1)(a), 5(1)(aba) and 5(1A)(a) firearms where a valid Section 5 authority is also required. All other parts including any items such as magazines, sights and other attachable accessories along with firearms furniture such as grips and stocks are not considered to be component parts and as a result do not require an import licence.

Firearms accessories

27. The only accessories that require an import licence are bump stocks (see 49 on page 6) and items designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the weapon. No other firearm accessory, e.g. sights, tripods, bags, belts etc., requires an import licence.

Ammunition

28. Ammunition that is neither expanding ammunition for pistols and revolvers, armour piercing nor incendiary falls to section 1 of the Firearms Act. A suitably conditioned Firearm Certificate (FAC) or Registered Firearms Dealer (RFD) Certificate is required before an import licence can be issued.

Shotgun Ammunition

29. You do not need an import licence for cartridges for smooth-bore guns containing five or more shot, none of which exceeds 0.36 inches (9mm) in diameter.

Expanding Ammunition

30. Expanding ammunition for use only with a pistol or revolver falls to section 5(1A)(f) of the Firearms Act whilst expanding ammunition for rifles only falls to section 1. A suitably conditioned Firearm Certificate (FAC) or Registered Firearms Dealer (RFD) Certificate is required before an import licence can be issued.

Deactivated firearms

31. Deactivated firearms falling to Chapters 93 or 97 of the tariff require an import licence to enter the UK. An import licence will only be issued if the firearm conforms to the current deactivation standards. Your import licence and Deactivation Certificate must travel with you as these must be presented for checking at the UK border.

32. UK Deactivation standards for firearms changed in 2016 and again in 2018. For EU transfers of deactivated firearms, the UK's prior consent (an import licence) is required. As proof of deactivation you will need to provide a copy of your deactivation Certificate conforming to implementing regulation (EU) 2018/337. In practice, this means a Certificate of deactivation issued on or after 28th June 2018).

33. For imports from outside the EU, only Certificates of deactivation issued by a UK Proof House showing proof of deactivation to the standard set in implementing regulation ((EU) 2018/337 will be accepted. In practice, this means that your local Certificate of deactivation is unlikely to be acceptable and you will need to use a Registered Firearms Dealer to import your firearm for deactivation and reproofing by a UK Proof House. All previously issued UK Deactivation Certificates are no longer valid for import licensing purposes unless they are for mortars, launchers, artillery or fixed large calibre firearms on fighting vehicles where the 2010 UK standards and proof marking still apply. Further advice on deactivation standards is available from the Proof House Authority; their contact details are:

Birmingham Proof House	London Proof House
Banbury Street	48 Commercial Road
Birmingham	London
B5 5RH	E1 1LP
0121 643 3860	020 7481 2695

34. Deactivated firearms manufactured on or before 31 December 1899 do not require an import licence.
35. If you wish to import a firearm for deactivation to the current standard, you will need to get a Registered Firearms Dealer (RFD) to temporarily import the firearm for you. The RFD will arrange for the firearm to be deactivated to the current standard and obtain a UK Proof House Certificate of Deactivation. The RFD will then apply for a “deactivated firearm” import licence. Once issued, you will be able to possess the firearm.

Overseas re-enactment events using deactivated firearms

36. Re-enactors will be able to apply for a three year import licence provided you have the new EU Certificate of deactivation and are a member of a re-enactment society when you attend the overseas re-enactment event. Separate import licences will be required for EU and non-EU events.

Air weapons

37. Air weapons require an import licence if:
- they have been disguised as another object; or
 - have been designed or adapted for use with a self-contained gas cartridge system; or
 - are air pistols that discharge a missile so that missile has, on being discharged from the muzzle of the weapon, kinetic energy in excess of 6ft lb (8.14 joules); or
 - are air weapons other than air pistols that discharge a missile so that missile has, on being discharged from the muzzle of the weapon, kinetic energy in excess, of 12ft lb (16.27 joules), or
 - are self-loading or pump action
38. Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, air pistols are subject to import licensing control as section 5 firearms if:
- they use or are designed or adapted for use with a self-contained gas cartridge system, or
 - are capable of discharging a missile so that the missile has, on being discharged from the muzzle of the weapon, kinetic energy in excess of 6ft lb (8.14 joules), or
 - Are self-loading.
39. Air weapons other than air pistols are subject to import licensing control as section 1 firearms if they discharge a missile so that missile has, on being discharged from the muzzle of the weapon, kinetic energy in excess, of 12ft lb (16.27 joules). Air weapons other than air pistols are subject to import licensing controls as section 5 firearms if they are self-loading or pump action.
40. You will not need to apply for an import licence for an air rifle or an air pistol as long as they:
- Have not been disguised as another object,
 - Have not been designed or adapted for use with a self-contained gas cartridge system,
 - Are Single shot barrelled weapons designed to discharge only plastic or part-plastic spherical missiles of a maximum diameter of 8mm, firing with a maximum kinetic energy of 2.5 joules,
 - Are Barrelled weapons capable of firing two or more missiles successively without repeated pressure on the trigger, designed to discharge only plastic or part-plastic spherical missiles of a maximum diameter of 8mm, firing with a maximum kinetic energy of 1.3 joules.
 - are not self-loading or pump action
 - Are for use only when submerged in water.

Replica firearms

41. An import licence is not required to import replica firearms into the UK as long as they are not readily convertible to fire live ammunition. A firearm is considered to be “Readily convertible” if it can be converted without any special skill or using articles in general use.

Realistic imitation firearms (RIF)

42. A realistic imitation firearm is defined in section 38 of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 (VCRA) as an imitation firearm which has *“an appearance that is so realistic as to make it indistinguishable, for all practical purposes, from a real firearm and is neither a deactivated firearm nor itself an antique.”*
43. Section 36 of the VCRA made it an offence to manufacture, import or sell a realistic imitation firearm or to modify an imitation firearm so that it becomes a realistic imitation firearm. A realistic imitation firearm brought into the UK is liable to forfeiture.
44. However, it was recognised that there are a number of legitimate activities where a realistic imitation firearm is necessary such as display in a museum. To accommodate these, section 37 of the VCRA provides for a number of defences and a person charged with an offence under section 36 would need to show that the imitation firearm in question was intended for one of the following purposes: a museum or gallery, theatrical performances or rehearsals, the production of films or television programmes, the organisation or holding of historical re-enactments and air soft skirmishing. Ultimately, it is a matter for the courts to test any defence offered by anyone charged with an offence under the Act but for example attendance at a commemoration event by historical re-enactors would seem to be a valid defence under the RIF legislation. When taking a RIF overseas you must also ensure that you are also compliant with any RIF legislation in the country you are visiting.
45. Section 38(8) explains that in subsection (7) “modern firearm” means any firearm other than one the appearance of which would tend to identify it as having a design and mechanism of a sort first dating from before the year 1870. Any which conformed to this definition would not be regarded as a RIF but the converse also applies and if you intend taking any reproductions of a modern design to commemoration events in Belgium or France would need to ensure that you met the valid defence requirements under the RIF legislation.

Paintball weapons and ammunition

46. An import licence is not required provided that the paintball gun is designed specifically for that purpose and cannot be readily converted or capable of firing a paintball with sufficient kinetic energy to either penetrate the skin or cause internal injuries by the sheer force of the impact. An import licence is not required for non-toxic and non-irritant paintball ammunition. Certain paintball weapons are classed as Realistic Imitation Firearms (RIF) because of their design, i.e. size, shape and colour, and are controlled by the VCRA – see entries 40 to 43 of this Notice for guidance on the import of RIF.

Museums

47. Museums importing firearms are not exempt from import licensing controls even if the firearm is exempt from domestic possession controls. Museums are also not exempt from the requirement to have a deactivated firearm certificate meeting the current standard when importing firearms.

Firearms collectors

48. Firearms being imported by Collectors are not exempt from import licensing controls even if the firearm in question is exempt from domestic possession controls.

Imports by the Police

49. Police forces are exempt from the domestic authority requirement for firearms and ammunition. They are not exempt from the import licence requirement.

Bump stocks

50. Bump stocks are devices which, when fitted or added to a self-loading firearm, utilise the recoil forces to automate repeated pressure on the trigger, increasing the rate of fire of the firearm. They are now controlled under section 5(1)(ba) of the Firearms Act 1968, as amended.

Firearms marking requirements

51. EU Directive 2017/853 introduced new common EU marking controls on firearms and component parts. These go further than those in force by members of C.I.P such as the UK. These new marking requirements controls are being implemented administratively by the UK using import licensing controls. They apply to commercial and non-commercial imports.
52. All markings must be clear, permanent and visible. All firearms manufactured on or after 1 January 1900 must be marked with:
- Name of manufacturer or brand;
 - Country or place of manufacture;
 - Serial number;

- Year of manufacture (if not part of the serial number);

53. Additionally, EU Directive 2017/853 requires the following essential component parts (barrel, frame, receiver (including upper and lower receivers), slide, cylinder, bolt or breech block to be marked with:

- the name of manufacturer or brand;
- country or place of manufacture;
- serial number;
- year of manufacture (if not part of serial number);
- if feasible model type.
- Where too small to be marked a component must have either a serial, alpha-numeric or digital code.
- Ammunition packaging (not each bullet) must be marked with name of manufacturer, batch number, calibre, type of ammunition.

54. If a firearm is not marked as above, importers will have 28 days after import to comply with the marking requirement. Failure to comply is a customs offence. The EU will publish detailed guidance on how the marking should be done at a later date. In the meantime, you are advised to mark using methods currently accepted by the UK Proof Houses.

55. The following are exempt from the additional marking requirements of EU Directive 2017/853:

- Firearms sold to the military or police.
- Firearms already in the EU Single Market before 14 September 2018.
- Firearms of "historical" importance which in the UK will be all firearms manufactured before 1 September 1939 regardless of where imported from.

Help

56. The simplified guide below explains when firearms, component parts and ammunition require import licences to enter the UK. Please start at question 1 and follow the instructions until you get a specific Yes/No answer to whether you require an import licence or not. If you are in any doubt or require further clarification on the need for an import licence, please email us at enquiries.ilb@trade.gsi.gov.uk.

This notice is for information purposes only and has no force in law. Please note that where legal advice is required, you should make your own arrangements.

Definitions

"It" means Firearms, their component parts and ammunition.

BVP means British Visitors Permit

EFP means European Firearms Pass

	Question	Answer	Import Licence required
1	Does it fall to Chapter 93 or 97 of the UK tariff?	No	No
		Yes	Go to question 2
2	Was it manufactured after 31 December 1899?	No	No
		Yes	Go to question 3
3	Does it fall within the Firearms Act?	No	No
		Yes	Go to question 4
4	Is it being imported by UK Police?	Yes	Go to question 5
		No	Go to question 6
5	Is it covered by the Open Individual Import Licence (Police)?	Yes	No
		No	Yes
6	Is it being imported by a Proof House?	Yes	Yes
		No	Go to question 7
7	Is it being imported by the MOD?	Yes	No
		No	Go to question 8
8	Is it being imported by a Museum?	Yes	Yes
		No	Go to question 9
9	Is it a component part of ammunition?	Yes	No

	Question	Answer	Import Licence required
		No	Go to question 10
10	Is it cartridges for smooth-bore guns containing five or more shot, none of which exceeds 0.36 inches (9mm) in diameter?	Yes	No
		No	Go to question 11
11	Is it blank cartridges not exceeding 1 inch (25mm) in diameter?	Yes	No
		No	Go to question 12
12	Does the transfer fall within the firearms directive?	No	Go to question 13
		Yes	Go to question 16
13	Is it a personal importation?	Yes	Go to question 14
		No	Go to question 15
14	Are you a UK resident?	Yes	No. UK Domestic Authority to possess certificate required.
		No	No. BVP required.
15	Is it prohibited under Section 5 of the Firearms Act?	Yes	Yes
		No	Yes
16	Is it a commercial importation?	Yes	Go to question 17
		No	Go to question 18
17	Is it prohibited under section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968?	Yes	Yes. A transfer document issued by the transferring Member State also required.
		No	No. A transfer document issued by the transferring Member State and valid domestic authority required.
18	Are you a UK resident?	Yes	Go to question 19
		No	Go to question 20
19	Is it newly acquired?	Yes	No. A valid domestic authority to possess.
		No	No. A valid EFP and UK domestic authority required.
20	Are you an EU resident?	Yes	No. A valid BVP and EFP required.
		No	No. A valid BVP only required.