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## FRANCE URGES GERMANY TO EASE ARMS EXPORTS RULES: REPORT

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Deutsche Welle (24 February 2019)

The French Economy Minister has demanded German relax its arms exports restrictions. The call comes after a German gun maker was fined for weapons exports to Mexico.

French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire said draft French-German arms export guidelines were needed for exports outside Europe so that both countries could be jointly "competitive and efficient," in comments carried by Germany's Welt am Sonntag newspaper on Sunday.

Last Thursday, a Stuttgart court fined gun maker Heckler & Koch 17 million (\$4.2 million) for illegally exporting G36 assault rifles to the Mexican state of Guerrero, the scene of student murders and disappearances in 2014.

Le Maire told Welt: "It is useless to produce weapons through better cooperation between France and Germany if one is not in the position to export them."

His remark follows criticism from France and Britain over Germany's apparent backtracking amid longstanding joint military aviation projects such as the Eurofighter and Tornado.

### **Le Maire: production 'useless' if not exported**

Reacting to last year's murder in Istanbul of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Berlin in recent months said it would reject future arms export licenses to Riyadh and urged industry to refrain from delivery in the meantime.

Le Maire told the paper: "I would like to also remind [everyone] hat France has and will retain very strict rules for the export of weapons."

"Our hope is that we will come to an agreement with Germany on this crucial point," said Le Maire, adding that compromise was necessary given a weapons development passage was included in their recent treaty signed in Aachen.

Protecting the public in a "violent world" required that Germany and other European states invest more in defense and related innovation, he said.

At last week's sentencing, veteran German anti-arms trade activist Jürgen Grässlin said the Stuttgart trial had revealed how ineffective Germany's arms export controls had been.

Left party ex-parliamentarian and former UN weapons inspector Jan van Aken said the trial showed that "we have no way of prosecuting a company."

Heckler & Koch was fined 100 million and two employees were given a mix of suspended terms, fines and community work, while several others, including a CEO, were acquitted.

Last Tuesday in Berlin, Le Maire and German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier outlined a joint industrial policy manifesto intended to boost innovative projects such as battery production for renewable energy capture and artificial intelligence.

ipj/aw (AFP, epd, Reuters, dpa)

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