



Patrick Goergen  Oct 19, 2021 1 min read

Several EU-based firms suspected of participating in a scheme to smuggle arms to Belarus and Russia

According to Moldovan law-enforcement authorities, in 2020 several EU-based firms were stopped when attempting to export arms to Belarus and Russia via Moldova. The arms ranging from ammunition to sniper-rifles used for sport or by special police. The activities highlighted a potential loophole in EU arms embargoes by re-exporting arms to embargoed countries through a third country.

The EU has an arms embargo on Belarus and on Russia. However, while the Republic of Moldova participates in many EU agreements and programmes, it remains a non-EU country and is not bound by EU sanctions unless ratified under Moldovan national law. Three firms from Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia are suspected of trying to by-pass those embargos, by declaring the end-user to be in the civilian market in Moldova, and then re-exporting to an embargoed country.



Moldovan authorities identified this potential scheme, launched its own investigation, and informed the EU External Action Service (EEAS). In the EU, the EEAS pursues potential cases of violation of EU arms embargoes, informing the relevant EU member state(s) and requesting the necessary information in order to investigate the allegations and ensure implementation of the embargo. Further investigation on widened the list of potential EU culprits.

While Moldova appears open to collaboration with any EU institution or EU member state agency investigating this case, the scheme raises the question of whether it is the tip of the iceberg in the black market export of EU arms to embargoed states.

Source: EUobserver