

Would-be gun importer receives increased sentence after referral to the Court of Appeal

News story

Haroon Iqbal will spend longer in prison for attempting to import a prohibited weapon.



A man who attempted to import a gun into the UK has received an increased prison sentence after his case was referred to the Court of Appeal by the then Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP.

From November 2021-February 2022, Haroon Iqbal, now 32, ordered various gun parts from the dark web and gave the seller detailed instructions on how to hide them in packages to avoid detection.

He was caught after unknowingly communicating with an undercover US Law Enforcement officer while carrying out his plan.

On 26 May 2022, Iqbal was sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court to 2 years 3 months' imprisonment for attempting to possess a prohibited weapon.

Following the sentencing, the then Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP, referred Iqbal's sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme as he felt that the original sentence was too low.

On 27 July 2022 the Court found his original sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 3 years and 9 months' imprisonment.

Speaking after the hearing, the now Solicitor General Edward Timpson CBE QC MP said:

Iqbal devised a sophisticated plan to bring a prohibited weapon into the UK, and knowingly tried to evade law enforcement to achieve this.

I welcome the decision to increase his sentence, which better reflects the serious nature of this offence and its potential consequences had Iqbal been successful.

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Scottish Secretary responds to May 2022 GDP

News story

As the latest GDP figures are published, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack says sustainable economic recovery is our priority.



Figures for Scotland's GDP for May 2022 have been published [here](#) today [Wednesday 27 July 2022].

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Seeing the economy growing is a good sign, but we recognise there are challenges ahead and we remain focused on supporting families with the rising cost of living.

That's why we've put in place a £37 billion support package to help those who need it most. Last week we began making cost of living payments, part of a scheme that ensures almost all of the UK's vulnerable 8 million low-income households will receive support of at least £1,200. That's on top of raising the National insurance threshold, cutting the Universal Credit Taper Rate and increasing the National Living Wage to ensure workers keep more of their wages in their pockets.

Achieving a strong and sustainable economic recovery is our priority. We're spending £2 billion levelling up communities across Scotland, creating well-paid and highly-skilled jobs, and we're also investing a further £52 million to create two Green Freeports in Scotland that will boost investment and trade as well as encouraging long-term prosperity by creating jobs and regenerating communities.

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[Call for officials to pilot new equalities duty training](#)

Press release

An opportunity for officials to trial our new equalities training in September



We recently published an [article](#) summarising how we can support colleagues working to understand the equalities impacts of policy decisions. We are continuing to develop our equalities offer, and [we are now seeking volunteers from across the public sector to help us trial a new equalities duty training session.](#)

We will aim to run the trial in September for up to 20 officials.

The training will cover:

- What the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is and what it requires of organisations
- Understanding the evidence base in a policy area
- Where to find relevant data
- Engaging with experts, including academics, advocacy groups and think

tanks

Due to limited space, we will prioritise officials who:

- Support teams with equalities considerations, including PSED compliance
- Lead on policy areas with a pressing need to consider the impact of policy on different communities

You can register your interest using this [online form](#). If you have any other queries, or would like to commission us to explore the equalities impacts in your policy area, please contact us via enquiries@openinnovation.gov.uk

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[Environment Agency flood defences now talk back](#)

Press release

Flood defences in Devon and Cornwall are becoming chattier than ever, engaging passersby in conversations about flood risk and plastic pollution.



Learn more about flood defences when visiting the beach this summer by scanning QR codes

Text message conversations can be struck up with flood defences and other assets by scanning QR codes. The QR code is mounted on them or nearby in 4 locations, with a fifth to be added later this year.

Liz Taylor, flood resilience engagement advisor, said:

Finding new and interesting ways to engage people is key. And using

Hello Lamp Post technology will help make us more relevant to a newer audience who prefer texting.

But the advice being shared through our growing network is relevant to everyone. How to stay safe in a flood. How defences work. And ways to start making lifestyle changes to cut down on plastic waste from our in-house team of experts.

We also hope to add advice on saving water from South West Water in the future. If you see one of QR codes during the school holiday, try it.

Interactive objects can be found at:

- Bude where signs give information about the flood risk in the area and the changing coast line, as well as a fun plastics quiz;
- Dartmoor which has signs in Buckfastleigh and on Dartmoor so people can find out more about how working with natural processes on the moor can reduce the impact of flooding on communities;
- Exmouth where people can learn more about the recently completed tidal defence scheme and plastic pollution;
- Truro which is a terrific location to learn what the tidal gate does and how to prepare for a flood.

Jessica Hickie, plastics and sustainability programme manager, said:

Be part of the solution during Plastic Free July 2022. Chat with the signs at Exmouth. Learn the simple actions you could take to tackle plastic pollution in your day to day life and protect our wildlife.

The actions include a simple litter pick, kitchen refills and finding out about a hard-to-recycle item. They have been put together by the Environment Agency on behalf of the [Interreg Preventing Plastic Pollution](#). The project which aims to understand and reduce the impacts of plastic pollution in river and marine environments via behaviour change, targeting hotspots and finding effective solutions.

Editor's notes

Across Devon and Cornwall there are 45 signs. Since they have been installed the number of interactions is the equivalent of holding around 40 public engagement events. They have helped us save nearly 5 tonnes of carbon.

The next location to be added is East Budleigh where people can find out more about the Lower Otter Restoration Project.

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DASA Launches DTEP

- The Defence Technology Exploitation Programme will help keep the UK at the forefront of defence technology
- Joining innovations and up to 50% of government funding with large suppliers
- Grants of up to £500,000 available per project

A £16 million programme to boost small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) defence innovation has been launched today.

With the innovation of SMEs, the resources of big suppliers and initial funding from government, the Defence Technology Exploitation Programme (DTEP) is designed to bring the key components together to allow pioneering projects to flourish.

The aim is to keep the United Kingdom at the forefront of defence technology, improving the capabilities available to our Armed Forces, the competitiveness of UK industry and growing potential exports benefits.

Individual grants of up to 50% of a project's value – to a maximum of £500,000 per grant – will be available through DTEP for collaborative projects between SMEs and larger suppliers, supporting the integration of novel technologies, materials and processes into MOD's supply chains.

DTEP will be open for proposals year-round, with cycles closing at 3-month intervals for assessment of submissions.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

Innovation within defence is crucial to maintaining competitive advantage for our Armed Forces.

The Defence Technology Exploitation Programme is a positive step in how we support SMEs and larger suppliers to work together to improve the resilience and competitiveness of the MOD's supply chain.

Today's launch builds upon the successful BEIS-funded National Aerospace Technology Exploitation Programme (NATEP) and a pilot of DTEP conducted with Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI). An example of work supported by this pilot is CCP Gransden, based near Ballygowan, collaborating with Thales and Ulster University on a project to replace the Starstreak surface-to-air missile system's metallic canister with a composite version – reducing reliance on global supply chains for the over 50 components currently needed.

Head of the Defence and Security Accelerator, Anita Friend said:

DTEP has been designed to help SMEs join defence supply chains and offers SMEs and larger suppliers the opportunity to come together to solve defence problems.

For an SME, DTEP offers not only funding but also the opportunity to deliver new innovations into the UK defence supply chain and a way to develop and scale up their business. DTEP is also beneficial for larger companies, offering early access to new technologies or processes that they may be able to help commercialise.

Applications to DTEP can be made by UK-based SMEs looking to form a collaboration with a UK-based higher-tier supplier to help integrate and take the novel solution to market. The key areas of interest for proposals are set out in detail on the DTEP portal and are aligned with the recently published [Defence Capability Framework](#).

DASA DTEP Business Relationship Managers will be available at all steps of the process, from project formation until after project completion. They will support SMEs through signposting, mentoring and offering other support services.

DTEP will be delivered by the MOD's Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA), in partnership with the Innovate UK group, and it is a core commitment in the [Defence and Security Industrial Strategy](#) and [SME Action Plan](#).

DTEP guidance can be accessed [here](#).