

Russia and Britain to Work Together on Defense Projects

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — Russia could begin to sell weapons to Britain for the first time under a pioneering defense treaty between the former Cold War enemies, according to a report Monday.

Defense chiefs in London and Moscow are preparing to sign an agreement that would see British companies working jointly on projects with Russian arms manufacturers, The Daily Telegraph reported.

The treaty would allow British arms companies to buy weapons from Russia, raising the possibility that British troops could someday be equipped with Kalashnikov rifles.

The paper reported British Defense Ministry sources as stating that the main focus of the agreement, however, was to permit information sharing between companies and to allow firms to buy components from each other.

The document, which is being prepared by Britain's Defense Ministry and Russia's Federal Service for Military Technical Cooperation, could be ready for signing in the spring. It covers so-called "unclassified" technology and would likely exclude cooperation on missile systems and other advanced battlefield equipment between Russia and Britain, the latter of which is a key member of the NATO alliance.

But the newspaper reported that diplomats and defense officials regarded the agreement as a major step in improving relations between the two countries, which plunged into crisis after the death by radiation poisoning of the dissident former security officer Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006.

British and Russian security services have cooperated in preparations to ensure the safety of athletes and spectators at the Sochi Winter Olympics, which open on Feb. 7. President Vladimir Putin also presented medals to British veterans of the Arctic convoys to thank them for their courage in carrying vital supplies to the Soviet Union during World War II.

The newspaper reported that only 600 British companies currently trade in Russia, compared with 7,000 German ones.

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