DEFENSE TRADE SOLUTIONS

CHECKLIST

Questions to Ask Your Global Trade Partner or In-House Team Before Your Next Contract Award or Industry Event

The questions you ask before you commit to an international opportunity matter more than the ones you ask after something goes wrong.

Whether you are preparing for a contract award, heading into conversations at an industry event, evaluating a new compliance partner, or pressure-testing your in-house team, this checklist helps you see whether your global trade support can handle the full defense trade picture before the next opportunity is already in motion.

Use it to identify where coverage, capacity, or accountability may be weaker than it looks.

Coverage & Range

These questions test whether your current partner or in-house team can support the full lifecycle of a defense trade engagement, not just the first issue that triggered the conversation.

- [ ] **Does your current partner or team cover the full defense trade picture, including licensing and agreements, jurisdiction and classification, global trade program management, designing for exportability, logistics and customs, and Technology Security and Foreign Disclosure?**

  Why it matters: Most compliance gaps do not show up only in the area you hired someone to cover. They show up where responsibilities overlap. A hardware license may get filed, but no one accounts for defense services, proviso compliance, deemed export risk, the contract framework, TSFD implications, or whether the configuration is exportable in the first place.

- [ ] **What happens when an issue outside their core specialty comes up, such as an FMS opportunity landing while they are working on your ITAR licensing?**

  Why it matters: Defense trade does not stay in neat lanes. Security cooperation, global trade authorizations, Technology Security and Foreign Disclosure, compliance infrastructure, logistics, and customs often intersect. If your partner has to refer you out when the issue crosses a boundary, you lose time, context, and momentum.

- [ ] **Can they support your full engagement model, not just the initial export license?**

  Why it matters: The common blindside in defense trade is discovering mid-commitment that you only authorized half the engagement. Your hardware license may clear the export, but the training, integration support, technical data exchanges, contractor logistics support, or post-delivery services your customer needs may require a different authorization pathway. A partner who maps out the whole picture up front helps prevent that.

- [ ] **Do they understand both ITAR and EAR, and can they handle jurisdictional and classification issues when your technology does not fit neatly into either regime?**

  Why it matters: Modern defense technology does not always follow clean regulatory lines. Getting jurisdiction or classification wrong can affect every downstream decision, including licensing strategy, releasability, exportability, customer commitments, and program timelines. For defense technology, understanding U.S. Government Technology Security and Foreign Disclosure considerations early can help prevent avoidable delays, redesign, or licensing issues later.

Responsiveness & Capacity

These questions test whether your compliance support can move at the speed your business actually operates, especially when the opportunity is urgent, the project scales, or your primary contact is unavailable.

- [ ] **How quickly can they turn around an urgent classification question or authorization request when a deal is on the line?**

  Why it matters: Export authorizations are often the single bottleneck between a signed contract and recognized revenue. The difference between 180-day and 53-day processing is not just a compliance metric. It is a cash flow metric.

- [ ] **If your primary point of contact is unavailable, do you have bench depth, or does everything stop?**

  Why it matters: A single in-house hire or a boutique firm with one practitioner creates a single point of failure. When that person is on leave, overwhelmed, or gone, your compliance posture does not pause. Your obligations and your customers' timelines do not either.

- [ ] **Can they scale with you if your international portfolio grows, including more markets, more customers, and more authorization types, without starting over?**

  Why it matters: The managed services model should grow with your business. If scaling from five export authorizations a year to fifty means renegotiating from scratch, attempting to hire full-time resources, or hiring a second firm, the model is not built for how defense companies actually grow.

Proof & Accountability

These questions test whether your compliance partner can show you outcomes, not just activity, and whether they have a process for when things do not go as planned.

- [ ] **Can they point to measurable outcomes from past engagements, such as reduced processing times, markets opened, or penalties mitigated, not just a list of services performed?**

  Why it matters: There is a difference between a partner who filed your paperwork and a partner who cut your export authorization timeline in half. The best compliance relationships produce quantifiable business results, not just checked boxes.

- [ ] **What is their process when something falls through the cracks, such as a rejected application, a missed deadline, or a regulatory change that affects an active authorization?**

  Why it matters: Every compliance engagement hits friction at some point. What separates good partners from bad ones is not a perfect record. It is a visible, repeatable process for catching problems early, escalating with the right U.S. Government offices, and getting things back on track without the client having to manage the crisis.

- [ ] **Do they have direct relationships with the U.S. Government offices that matter, including DDTC, RSAT, BIS, DoD, TSC, MILDEPs, and ATEA, or are they working through the same channels you could access yourself?**

  Why it matters: Access to a robust U.S. Government network is one of the hardest things to replicate in-house. It is what turns a "wait and see" authorization into a proactive conversation with the right action officer, and it is what separates firms that can escalate effectively from firms that just submit and hope.

- [ ] **Are they doing the work themselves, or advising you on what to do and leaving the execution to your team?**

  Why it matters: There is a meaningful difference between a partner who builds, manages, and executes your compliance programs and one who simply tells you the answer and sends an invoice. If your team is still doing the heavy lifting, you are paying for advice, not capacity.

If any of these questions gave you pause, it's worth a conversation.

These are not trick questions. They are the questions our own clients wish they had asked before their last contract award, their last compliance gap, or their last conversation with a partner who turned out to be the wrong fit.

If any of them gave you pause, talk through what you found with the experts at **Defense Trade Solutions.**

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