

Reportage. 'It is clear that the legislative gap must be closed in order to prevent cartridges meant for hunting wild boars from becoming bullets for killing people.'

After Italian bullets discovered in Myanmar, legislators focus on arms loopholes

written by **Alessandro De Pascale, Emanuele Giordana**



Topic
Italy

Published on
July 20, 2021

The Livorno-based company Cheddite, at the center of the controversy over the cartridges with its brand name that were found in Myanmar in March, in places where clashes between the civilian population and the Burmese military coup had taken place, is still not responding to our requests for clarification. It's the same with the Turkish company that owns the Yaf brand (ZSR Patlayici Sanayi A.S.), through which the Italian 12-gauge hunting cartridges are suspected to have arrived on Burmese soil.

The government's response to Erasmo Palazzotto's parliamentary question—which *il manifesto* reported on last Thursday—about how the arms embargo to which the EU has subjected Myanmar since the 1990s could have been circumvented was a highly detailed one, thanks also to an inspection carried out by the Livorno police at the Franco-Italian company.

The answer, delivered by the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Manlio Di Stefano (M5S), confirms what *il manifesto* has called "the Turkish route," i.e. the supply to the Anatolian company in question of "400,000 kg of smokeless powder for the production of hunting and shooting cartridges for smoothbore shotguns" on February 26, 2020 and January 20, 2021. Moreover, until a few years ago, as shown by Chamber of Commerce documents, the French-Italian company Cheddite held direct shares in the Turkish company Yaf, which would have allowed the Anatolian company to produce and market Cheddite-Yaf branded cartridges on its own, most probably directly in Turkey.

The relationship between the two companies has continued uninterrupted since Cheddite sold off its shares in Yaf, as the Italian government has confirmed the sale of raw materials (in this case, smokeless powder) to the Turks in recent times.

In his response on behalf of the government, Undersecretary Di Stefano also mentioned the request, filed by Cheddite in September 2018 and withdrawn exactly one month later, to export 600,000 12-gauge cartridges directly to Myanmar. This confirmed the existence of direct contacts with that country, in at least one verified case.

Also notable is the presence among the company's board of directors of Frederic Yvan Tung Gia Pham, a French citizen whose surname indicates he likely has family origins in the former French Indochina. From a simple online research, we find that Pham, after having owned his own company in Paris (Euro-Outdoor) which ended up in bankruptcy court, now seems to hold a role on the board of Cheddite in Livorno and also on those of other companies active in the production and trade of arms and ammunition, from France to Quebec, including Spain—such as Mary Arm SA, Nobel Sport Espana SA and Munitions Challengers.

An answer to Palazzotto's question (while a response to the question asked by deputy Lia Quartapelle is still pending) had also been requested by a network of Italian civil society organizations, which first asked for clarifications from Cheddite on March 18 (and received no answer), then met with the undersecretary. "Di Stefano's answer," commented Giorgio Beretta of Opal, "is very detailed and confirms the actual possibility that munitions or parts thereof produced in Italy are still being exported by the Turkish company to Myanmar, as happened in 2014. It's happening because Law 110/1975 (which regulates the export of common sporting and hunting arms and ammunition), unlike Law 185/1990 (which regulates the export of military arms and ammunition), does not require a company to notify the Italian authorities regarding the recipient and end user of the exported arms and ammunition. This is a problem that must be resolved as soon as possible."

Cecilia Brighi of Italia Burmania Insieme also thought the answer to Palazzotto's question was "appropriate," even if, she added, "he does not say anything about whether or not the government intends to support the amendments to Law 185/90 presented in Parliament in order to bring all arms and ammunition exports under the regime provided by Law 185/90." The same point was made by Raffaele Crocco, director of Atlante delle Guerre: "It is clear that the legislative gap must be closed in order to prevent cartridges meant for hunting wild boars from becoming bullets for killing people."



Subscribe To Our Newsletter
Your weekly briefing of progressive news.

Alessandro De Pascale, Emanuele Giordana

Originally published in Italian on July 18, 2021
<https://ilmanifesto.it/proiettili-italiani-in-myanmar-ora-bisogna-coltmare-il-buco/>



LOAD MORE ARTICLES