

Country report from SPAS Sweden

To the ENAAT meeting in London 20-21 February 1999

The sale of Jas

The biggest Swedish arms deal that has occurred during 1998 is of course the sale of Jas Gripen to South Africa. The deal is not really closed yet but SPAS can't see no real chance to stop it. There has been a quite big discussion in the media about it, especially about all the investments in South Africa from Swedish companies connected to the deal.

In the spring of -98 a coalition of organisations was formed to raise public awareness about the Swedish governments marketing of the Jas and about the inconsistency in Swedish foreign policy and development aid on one hand and the arms export on the other. We had a big hearing in early June with guest speakers from the three countries most likely to buy Jas then, Chile, South Africa and the Phillipines. Since then Chile has backed off a bit due to the low copper price, they can't afford the plane. The coalition of organisations is still meeting and writing debate articles and exchanging information. After debate articles and letters to the Swedish Church they have sold their shares in the company Investor who owns half of SAAB, but this was just the centrally placed money, many of the churches still has money in Investor, Ericsson and Volvo who all are involved in Jas Gripen.

Transparency

SPAS has been debating in the media that the level of transparency in the arms trade from Sweden has decreased during the last years. In 1995 the law on classification was made less restrictive but now it is changing. The responsible decisionmakers refuse to discuss single deals. The reports on the situation in the recipient countries are now classified. The government do not want to make any comments on whether a country is fulfilling the arms export regulations or not. The exact value of the export is classified and it is again classified what countries the different companies are exporting to. When SPAS published a debate article regarding this with a photo copy of a classified document in it the arms inspector Staffan Sohlman pressed charges on SPAS to the chancellor of justice for having classified documents. The chancellor has now decided not to press charges.

In December SPAS published a report on the transparency in arms export from the EU states, and it got quite good media attention. We have sent it to all the embassies and to the members in the EU Councils working group on arms export, COARM.

Landmines

SPAS is the only organisation working on the problems with the landmines. We have taken an initiative on forming an e-mail news letter "mine-news" that goes to organisations, ministry-staff and military personnel that are interested in the matter. The report to the landmine monitor has just been completed and we are now making it into a wider report for publishing. On the first of March we are arranging manifestations all over the country.

Last week we had a meeting with Bofors discussing their mine clearing machine "mine guzzler". We got them to promise that the incomes they get from it will not go to developing new arms.

In September we had a manifestation outside the Yugoslavian embassy protesting against that they use mines in Kosovo.

Arms export

SPAS has found out recent Swedish exports of grenades to Nepal, equipment to make explosives in Iran, military vehicles to Vietnam, robots to the Philippines. During 1997 the number of licences granted increased which meant that the arms export increased during 1998.

The law on "follow-on-deliveries" is currently to be examined and developed since a lot of scandals has been revealed. The arms exporting industries and some organisations working on the issue was invited to the Ministry of foreign affairs to put forward their view on what the regulations should look like. The industries pressed that it is totally essential for the closing of deals that follow on delivery can be guaranteed. The organisations (SPAS, SFOR and Amnesty) pressed for the regulations should be the same as for all export. The companies is very keen for the current regulations not to be changed, especially with the export of Jas. "With this advanced equipment that is constantly improved follow on delivery is very important. When pressed they stated that in the future it could be hard to make out the difference between follow on delivery and when actual "new" export is taking place.

The company Bofors has on their own initiative interrupted an export of arms equipment to Indonesia, a follow on delivery, even though the export was accepted by the government. Bofors didn't want to get all the bad opinions on export to Indonesia on them and therefore decided not to go on with the deal. This would mean that the importance of follow on delivery to be an credible arms export is not absolute, at least not for the companies (In the case of Jas, it is the governments credibility that is at stake)