

# Campaign Against Arms Trade

11 Goodwin Street  
Finsbury Park  
London  
N4 3HQ  
U.K.

Office Telephone: 0171 281 0297 Fax: 0171 281 4369

## CAAT - Country Report

Gideon

***1998 was a year of change and growth for the UK campaign - both in terms of the way we have worked, what has happened to the organisation and to the arms export industry - which we have had to respond to.***

A change in staff always brings a change in emphasis, and perhaps ideas. This year we have taken on a new research co-ordinator, who has been recruiting new volunteers to carry out projects with subjects as diverse as the UN, Chile, updating our material Indonesia - and importantly, looking again at our economic argument and the way they are used. Another new departure is our research on the use and brokering of mercenaries - which may build into a campaign of its own in the new year.

The new research co-ordinator has taken that load off the campaigns no-ordinator, who has traditionally looked after that side of things. My appointment has therefore allowed a little more freedom, and allowed me to energise parts of the campaign that previously had to be put on a back burner because of other work.

Our major campaigns over 98 have included the British Aerospace AGM (no 1 European arms exporter) which was better attended by protesters than ever before. 98 also saw the first international anti arms trade week - which was a moderate success, which for a first year gave a firm foundation on which to build for this year.

Stop The Arms Trade Week, as you will know, is now gathering momentum, and will reap the benefits of our experiences of this year. Our attendance at the COPEX private arms exhibition this year was not as good as in previous years. 23 people were arrested for blockading the highway - where we wanted to blockade had been barricaded off, which also meant that our contribution could only be minimum in terms of stopping COPEX from taking place. One thing that was a success was how those arrests and the campaign empowered the individuals involved - many of which have gone on to continue the campaign in their local areas.

From a protests and direct action perspective, things have been extremely busy this year - very much responding to that movement. s concerns about us and the role we could play. We have done die-ins a Labour party conference, and challenged BAe chair Richard Evans at a lecture he had given. Did a large banner drop and protest at Oxford university because of their share holdings - and only recently, myself and Martin were arrested in parliament when we challenged MPs on arms sales to Indonesia.

Press wise - there have been one or two real successes this year. Majorly, a comedian, Mark Thomas, has continued to be concerned about our cause and has done excellent work in exposing the arms industry for what it is. We have been able to build on that background. Many newspapers have covered our stories, and various protests have sparked 10 or 15 minute documentaries on the issue. There can be no doubt that the public at large are concerned about the arms trade - that concern must now be transferred into campaigning and support for organisations like our own.

Looking forward there are a number of things coming up of note internationally. Majorly, June sees the second international anti-arms trade week. In the UK we have

decided that our focus for the week is going to be debt and development, using the good work that other organisation, like Jubilee 2000 have been doing on the issue, and coinciding with the G8 conference in Cologne.

Another important thing coming up is that myself and Rachel will be going to Kurdistan as part of a European delegation in March, as observers of the situation there. This promises to be important for the campaign over here in a number of ways. Importantly, it may well be an opportunity for us to see British weapons, and those of European defence firms being used by the Turkish armed forces on the streets of Kurdistan. In terms of our press work in the UK it will help to show CAAT as balanced and concerned observers - who are more than a campaign, and are willing to make some investment with the issues we deal in.

New structure - 98 been a test year for the new CAAT structure, which has attempted to allow more democracy and consultation with our supporter body. For the first time, the CAAT steering committee has supporter representatives, and representatives from its various different networks.

In conclusion, I would like to lead on from that to say that our very diversity is our strength. Our supporter base simply cannot be defined in terms of pigeon holes or groups. We have church goers and pacifist Quakers, we have non-violent direct activists, protesters, political lobbyists, teachers, students, the unemployed - we draw our support from every section of the community, and we hope our volunteers also represent that spread. Certainly such a diversity allows us to spread our own message further and more effectively, really allowing us to engage with our supporters and allowing them to be the foundation for a larger campaign.

## **LOBBYING WORK**

**Ann Feltham**

***Four UK government departments have an interest in arms exports.***

### ***Department of Trade and Industry***

Following the Scott Report on arms sales to Iraq, the Conservatives published a Green (consultative) Paper in 1996 on Strategic Export Controls. Publication of a White Paper (the government's intentions) on the same subject was delayed and delayed until July 1998. The White Paper invited comments by the end of September and CAAT made a submission.

This stressed that:

- a)** for a proper debate, details of individual export licence applications must be made public. It is not good enough to quote commercial confidentially;
- b)** the proposed controls on trafficking and brokerage should not be more limited than those on the export of equipment as arms dealers are very adapt at using the countries with the least strict regulations;
- c)** licensed production should be brought within the scope of the controls.

CAAT is also trying to persuade the DTI to revoke the licences for the export of Hawks aircraft to Indonesia. The economic situation in Indonesia means that the bill could well end up being paid by the UK tax-payer, if the aircraft actually go.

### ***Ministry of Defence***

The UK's Defence Diversification Agency was set up in December 1998. This is said by the Government to fulfil its election manifesto pledge.

CAAT is disappointed with the DDA because it has an emphasis on support for

military industry, rather than assistance with the reorientation of the economy from military to civil production.

- a) The DDA is placed within the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency.
- b) Whilst the DDA will try to make military technology and expertise more widely available for commercial exploitation, it will also encourage the transfer of civil technology to military programmes.
- c) The DDA's operating budget will be about £2 million, in contrast with the Defence Export Services Organisation's £16 million.
- d) "Unless there is a real prospect of benefit to the defence programme", companies approaching the DDA will be charged for any assistance given beyond the initial contacts.

The next arms exhibition is the Defence Systems and Equipment International taking place in Chertsey from 14th to 17th September. Whilst the MoD will control the guest list, the arrangements are being made by a private exhibition company. Although CAAT would like to see the exhibition stopped, it is trying to make sure through parliamentarians that there is as much information in the public domain as when the exhibition was government-run.

### ***Foreign and Commonwealth Office***

The long-awaited Annual Report on Strategic Exports is still delayed. CAAT's main lobbying point is that details of individual export licences should be published. There is not enough information for proper public debate without this.

On mercenaries, CAAT's policy has been to urge the Government to sign and ratify the 1989 UN Convention. However, there have been subsequent changes to the way mercenaries are being used, and CAAT will shortly be issuing a new briefing. The Government is saying that the UN Convention is not practicable, and that it is investigating the South African legislation.

CAAT is hoping to launch its briefing with a parliamentary meeting.

### ***Department for International Development***

The new DfID also considers export licences. CAAT's main work with this Department concerns the proposed huge export deal with South Africa. CAAT is trying to persuade DfID that the exports will severely undermine the country's economic and social development, and will further aggravate the poverty of most South Africans. The argument is also being used with MEPs. So far, it is proving very difficult, as there is a perception of the South African government as "good guys" who should be left to make their own decision.

***Party Conferences*** CAAT has also had meetings at the Labour Party Conference (on NATO and Indonesia) and Local Government Conference (on jobs).