

# Report from the Campaign Against Arms Trade (UK) to the meeting of the European Network Against Arms Trade – May 2006

## UK government

### Arms Trade Treaty

The UK government has continued to stress its support for an Arms Trade Treaty, but it has told industry that it will not make any difference to UK sales. It will ensure a level playing field with other countries brought up to UK standards! CAAT is trying to point out the contradiction between the Government promoting arms sales and the Arms Trade Treaty.

### Saudi Arabia

In December 2005 the UK government announced that it had signed a memorandum with Saudi Arabia. Under this, BAE Systems is negotiating to sell Eurofighter Typhoons.

CAAT is using the Freedom of Information Act, which came into force in January 2005, and old Government files at the National Archive to get as much information on the Saudi arms deals as possible. Most of the Freedom of Information requests were turned down and CAAT has appealed to the Information Commissioner and is waiting for his ruling on this. However, some historical documents from the National Archive show that the Government was aware that there was corruption, but did nothing.

## Call the Shots

Since 2005, CAAT's major campaign for its supporters has been "Call the Shots".

The first part of this was to try to "lock" the revolving door - stop ministers and civil servants joining arms companies immediately they leave office. In January 2006, CAAT submitted a paper to the Parliamentary Committee that was looking at a Report made for the Prime Minister about the procedures to be followed when people leave the civil service. The Committee has not yet reported.

The second part of the campaign is to close the Defence Export Services Organisation, part of the Ministry of Defence which promotes military equipment sales overseas. We are asking CAAT supporters to contact their own MPs, organisations to sign up to a Close DESO statement and people to come to a Day of Action on 16th October.

## Export credits and bribery

In May 2004, the Export Credits Guarantee Department strengthened its anti-corruption procedures. Three companies, BAE Systems, Airbus and Rolls Royce, did not like the new regulations (especially as they had to give the names of agents) and persuaded the Government to withdraw the new rules.

After a legal challenge by an anti-corruption group, Corner House, the Government agreed in to hold a public consultation over the proposals. This was in January 2005 and in March 2006 the results were finally announced. The ECGD has reintroduced key anti-corruption measures. These include a requirement for exporters to name agents involved in the transaction, but the current proposal for the method of doing so (itself the subject of yet another consultation) is in conditions of the most stringent secrecy.

In general, although some loopholes remain, the new procedures are a great improvement on the watered down ones and it is hoped that they will significantly reduce the potential for corruption.

## **Arms fairs**

CAAT held protests at the DSEi arms fair in London in September 2005; people from SPAS joined in which was great. DSEi is organised for the Ministry of Defence by Reed Elsevier, based in the UK and the Netherlands.

Reed Elsevier is mostly a publishing company and the medical publication *The Lancet* had an editorial at the time of the DSEi arms fair calling for an end to the fair. In spring 2006 CAAT protesters went to the London Book Fair, organised by Reed Elsevier, and gave out "bookmark" leaflets as well as wearing bright t-shirts and holding banners. Several well-known authors signed CAAT's letter calling for an end to Reed Elsevier's involvement in arms fairs and this got media coverage. CAAT shareholders again went to Reed's AGM and asked questions and have been invited to a meeting with Reed Elsevier. It would be good if next year similar questions were asked at the Amsterdam AGM the next day.

A small protest is being planned for the Farnborough Airshow in July 2006.

## **Clean Investment Campaign**

The Freedom of Information Act has helped the Clean Investment Campaign. Requests to the universities and local authorities have been made under the Act so the information is much more complete than it was when CAAT just had to hope they would respond.

The universities information has been used to start campaigning in colleges across the country and some have already sold their arms industry shares. A Universities Network has been set up.

The local authority figures have just been launched and have received a lot of press coverage. Efforts are still being made to persuade a local council to be the first to disinvest, but, so far, none have.

## **Supporters**

CAAT is continuing to increase its number of supporters - there are now over 15,000 people on our database with over 4,000 receiving *CAATnews* every two months.

Others receive the on-line email bulletin which goes out every month and CAAT is looking at ways of using new media to reach potential supporters.

## **Staffing**

The CAAT staff are now:

Kathryn Busby - fundraiser (full-time);

Beccie D'Cunha - local campaigns (3 days a week);

Patrick Delaney - sales worker (3 days a week);

Ann Feltham - parliamentary and lobbying work, liaison with other organisations in the UK and internationally, administration (full-time);

Anna Jones - actions and events (3 days a week)

Ian Prichard - research co-ordinator (full-time);

Recruitment is currently taking place for a 3 days a week press officer position.