

Report from the Campaign Against Arms Trade (UK) to the meeting of the European Network Against Arms Trade - June 2009

Saudi Arabia

The Government's appeal against the High Court judgment that it was unlawful for it to have stopped the Serious Fraud Office inquiry into BAE Systems' Al Yamamah arms deal with Saudi Arabia took place on 7th and 8th July 2008. The judgment in the Government's favour was given on 30th July, the Law Lords saying that if the SFO Director believed national security was threatened he was right to take the decision he did.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development issued a very critical report in October on the UK's anti-bribery procedures and actions. The OECD also criticised the Export Credits Guarantee Department's failure to take action when the SFO passed it evidence that BAE was not entirely truthful in its answers to questions when applying for export credit cover.

A CAAT researcher, Nicholas Gilby, was successful in his appeal to the Information Tribunal for the release of Foreign Office documents about early Saudi arms deals. The Tribunal ordered the release of the documents where the actions of UK officials are involved. This decision meant that other requests have also resulted in the release of documents so much more is becoming known about the history of the Saudi deals.

UKTI - armed and dangerous

UKTI: Armed & Dangerous has been CAAT's main campaign since November 2008. UK Trade & Investment has a Defence & Security Organisation (UKTI DSO) which promotes arms sales on behalf of the Government. CAAT is calling for this to be shut down. Campaign materials, including postcards and an online petition, have been produced. There have also been protest outside its offices. UKTI DSO is helping Clarion Events with the organisation of the Defence Systems & Equipment International (DSEi) exhibition being held in London Docklands from 8th to 11th September 2009.

Clarion Events also organises the Baby Show and the Spirit of Christmas Fair. CAAT wrote to all the other exhibitors at these. There was a very good response and many exhibitors wrote to Clarion to protest. UNICEF which was due to receive donations from ticket sales via nappy manufacturers Pampers withdrew from the Baby Show and refused to accept donations, with Pampers agreeing to cover their lost income.

ECGD

CAAT has continued to work on the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD) since in 2007/8, 57% of all goods covered were military. CAAT found out recently that the ECGD was no longer providing cover for the BAE Saudi arms deals, which means that the percentage of cover for military goods is likely to be far less in 2008/9.

Israel

Many people contacted the CAAT office when Israel attacked Gaza wanting to campaign for an arms embargo on Israel. CAAT supplied postcards to be sent to MPs and made sure the website contained up-to-date information.

In April 2009 the Foreign Secretary David Miliband admitted that Israeli equipment used in Gaza "almost certainly" contained UK-supplied components. He mentioned this was the case with F16 combat aircraft, Apache attack helicopters, Saar-Class corvettes and armoured personnel carriers. The following day another Minister said no licences for such components had been approved since the war on the Lebanon in 2006.

Corporate Mercenaries

CAAT, is still working with the development charity War on Want and Amnesty International UK, on the issue of Corporate Mercenaries, what the Government calls Private Military and Security Companies.

In April, after consulting for seven years, the Government proposed that the companies regulate themselves through their trade association, the British Association of Private Security Companies. CAAT and the other organisations think this is totally inadequate, and are arguing that the Government must introduce regulations.

Helping local campaigners

CAAT's Local Campaigns Co-ordinator is working hard to increase the amount of anti-arms trade activity around the country. She is supporting local groups and contacts, helping them by providing materials and through training. A speakers network is also being built up so that there are more people able to give talks about the arms trade.

She is also responsible for the CAAT Christian Network, which has a day of prayer in churches in June, and the Universities Network. This latter is looking at military research in universities and at university investments in military companies.

Website and general communications

CAAT has been reviewing how it communicates with supporters and others through its publication *CAATnews*, the email bulletin and the website. As more people want online campaigning information and activities, *CAATnews* is now being published four times a year rather than six and the email bulletin has been redesigned and goes out monthly.

The website is being changed gradually so that it is more user-friendly and more useful for campaigning, rather than just information.