

ITEC 2006

Training to Kill

ITEC is a specialist arms fair dedicated to military training and simulation. It is an annual event which took place in Amsterdam last year, and this year will take place in the ExCel Centre in London's Docklands from May 16th-18th. The equipment on display at ITEC ranges from simulators for training individual pilots to fly fighter jets and attack helicopters, to Command and Control systems for modelling full war scenarios, to equipment for high-tech target practice.

With weapons systems becoming increasingly complex, training and simulation is a booming business. In the introduction to the ITEC 2005 brochure, then UK Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said that "Individual training and education currently consumes some £4.2 billion in resource terms each year". Little wonder, then, that last year ITEC attracted 133 exhibitors, including seven of the ten biggest arms manufacturers in the world.

ITEC's role in Arms Company marketing

ITEC is organised by Reed Exhibitions, which is part of international information company Reed Elsevier. It lists ITEC firmly under 'defence' in its exhibitions listings, and points out that "Training and simulation are recognised as vital elements of all military operations and form a significant part of national defence budgets throughout the world." ITEC's main backers include the UK's trade association for the arms industry, the Defence Manufacturers Association. There can be little doubt that ITEC is an established part of the international arms fair circuit.

Many of the companies who will be present are the training and simulation divisions of major arms companies, such as BAE Systems Insyte or Saab Training Systems. Others such as FATS Inc or CAE are dedicated simulation companies. All will be equally happy to supply equipment to regimes regardless of their human rights record or current involvement in conflict. For instance, Lockheed Martin Simulation was awarded a contract to supply F-16 training to the Israeli Air Force in 2004, facilitating Israel's continued use of F-16s against Palestinian civilians in the illegally occupied Palestinian Territories.

As with most Arms Fairs, especially those in Europe, the majority of visitors to ITEC are from NATO and EU countries who have bigger military budgets. However, visitors in 2004 also came from Bangladesh, India, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Like all arms fairs, ITEC encourages the proliferation of arms and provides networking and sales opportunities for those involved in the industry. The Mayor of Amsterdam, Job Cohen, spoke out against ITEC 2005 in much the same way as Ken Livingstone spoke out against DSEi 2005 in London.

Reed Elsevier's Arms Fairs

Reed Exhibitions acquired ITEC in March 2003, the same year that it acquired Spearhead Ltd, the organisers of one of the world's largest arms fairs, Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi). DSEi takes place every other September at the ExCel Centre and attracts over 1,000 exhibitors, displaying everything from missiles to tanks to machine guns. Delegations from some of the world's worst human rights abusing regimes (Saudi Arabia, China, Israel, Colombia) are repeatedly invited by the organisers and the UK government which co-sponsors the event. Other exhibitions in what Reed Exhibitions refers to as its 'Defence and Aerospace portfolio' include Helitech in Cambridgeshire, and significant overseas arms fairs such as Latin America Aerospace and Defence (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) and Asian Defence Technology (Singapore).

Reed Elsevier likes to promote itself as an ethical company. It has signed the UN Global Compact which is a voluntary code of conduct designed to encourage corporate social responsibility. The Compact has several clauses which commit a company not to be complicit in human rights abuses in any way. Yet whilst Reed Elsevier tell us that they behave ethically, the fact that they have continued to acquire important arms fairs over that last few years tells a different story.



PHOTO: US AIRFORCE/1ST LT. NATHAN BROSHEAR

Equipment you might see at ITEC 2006

Hellfire missile target practice

Boeing's Hellfire air-to-ground anti-tank missile has been used recently by the Israeli Army for targeted killings in the Occupied Territories as well as extensively by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq. It can be fitted to a variety of aircraft but is conventionally used on the Apache attack helicopter. Boeing, who will be at ITEC this year, makes an Apache simulator which trains pilots to use the Hellfire missiles to deadly effect.

Combat Mission Simulator for AH/MH-6 helicopters.

The AH-6 and MH-6 are light helicopters made by Boeing and used for Special Operations and stealth missions. They can be fitted with machine guns, grenade launchers and missiles. The helicopters are used by the notorious 160th Special Operations Airborne Regiment of the US Army, who recently bought the simulators for them from manufacturers CAE. CAE are a Canadian military simulation company who are regular participants in ITEC and planning to exhibit in 2006.

F-16 Fighter Jet Simulators

Lockheed Martin's F-16 is a popular fighter-bomber which has been sold and used around the world. Amongst other abuses, F-16s have been implicated in the arial destruction of Kurdish villages by Turkish armed forces. Simulators for the F-16 are made not just by Lockheed Martin Simulation, but by others including L3 Communications. These two manufacturers will be at ITEC 2006.

How can organising arms fairs, which exist to sell lethal weapons to people who will use them, be anything but a direct contradiction to a commitment to human rights? When challenged about this at Reed Elsevier's 2005 AGM, its Chairman replied weakly that organising the exhibitions was OK, so long as "we don't deal ourselves in these kind of things, I suppose."

CAAT's Arms Fairs Campaign

Arms Fairs oil the wheels of the global arms trade, and so have long been a focus for CAAT's work. Yet the arms industry as a whole often behaves as if it is immune from public opinion since their business is with governments. This is not the case with Reed Elsevier. Their various divisions publish hundreds of academic journals, magazines and books, provide web portals for professionals such as lawyers, and organise other high profile exhibitions such as the London Book Fair. In fact, Arms Fairs are just a tiny proportion of Reed Elsevier's overall business – together with their aerospace exhibitions, they account for less than 0.5% of their total revenue.

All this means that putting pressure on Reed Elsevier to drop this dirty part of their business might just be

successful. Professional groups who use their services are already starting to organise. In 2005 leading doctors wrote to Reed Elsevier's flagship medical journal The Lancet about the publisher's involvement in the arms trade. This prompted the journal's own editorial board to issue a scathing condemnation of Reed Elsevier and call on their own bosses to stop organising Arms Fairs. Other groups, from novelists to High Energy Physicists are applying similar pressure.

Of course, even if it is successful, chasing Reed Elsevier out of the weapons exhibitions business isn't going to get rid of it. But it will make it much more difficult for others to continue organising them, and make it more difficult for the government to continue supporting them. Delegitimising the arms trade is an important step towards stopping it, and is vital if we are to get closer to ending the death and destruction that the arms trade perpetuates.

Visit www.armsfairs.com for the latest on CAAT's Arms Fairs campaign.

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