Shut down DESO and DSEi

The Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) is the government agency which is responsible for pushing UK arms exports. The Head of DESO is Alan Garwood and his address is Defence Export Services Organisation, St George’s Court, 2-12 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2SH. His email address is hdes@deso.mod.uk. Why not write him a polite note asking him to ensure that UK arms are not promoted to countries engaged in conflict (see the Briefing sheet for details). Please let CAAT have a copy of any reply.

DESO’s major event this year (2003) is the Defence Services Equipment International (DSEI) exhibition being held in London Docklands from September 9th–13th. CAAT is organising a major protest against this, the largest arms fair taking place in Europe this year. Please try to come along (more details are on the invitation enclosed in the Fanning the Flames pack). If you can’t come in person, please write a message on the “SHUT DSEI” sign and return it to us. They will be displayed at the DSEi exhibition protest.

Tell Tony to stop fanning the flames

Enclosed with the Fanning the Flames campaign pack you will find a couple of postcards addressed to Tony Blair. Please sign one and send it to him and ask friends to sign the others.

If you would like to have more impact, write to your local MP about the issue (you can use the draft letter on page 3, but try to put the message in your own words) asking her or him to pass on your concern to the Prime Minister. Don’t forget to ask for a reply. Please let CAAT have a copy of any reply.

Raise awareness and mobilising

Opinion polls show that the majority of people in the UK are deeply suspicious about the UK arms trade. However it seems that many people accept the government line that we are not supplying arms or military equipment to countries engaged in conflict. One of our key tasks as campaigners is to raise awareness of the extent of the UK arms trade and then to encourage people to act to end it. Can you help CAAT to raise awareness by:

- Asking if can put up a display about the arms trade in your local library, church or other public space;
- Inviting a CAAT speaker to any group or organisation that you are involved in such as union branch, Women’s Institute, Church group, Chamber of Commerce etc.
- Organise a group to come along to the DSEI protest in September 2003
- Speaking about the arms trade to friends, family or colleagues; one-to-one conversations are the best form of communication – remember we will be happy to send a free copy of the Fanning the Flames pack to anyone who is interested.
- If there are arms companies in your area, ask your local council what it is doing to help companies lessen dependence on military production.
Organise a public meeting

Whilst to many people the thought of organising a public meeting on the arms trade is a daunting task, with some careful planning and preparation, you could have a really successful event and raise a lot of awareness about the impact of the arms trade.

The most important elements of a good public meeting are: a central venue, a good speaker and lots and lots of publicity. It is also worth inviting some public figures like the local MP.

CAAT is always ready and willing to provide a speaker and can also help with publicity – for instance by letting CAAT supporters in the area know about the event. It will also be worth telling other groups in the area – such as Amnesty International, WDM, Oxfam, etc. so they can help publicise the meeting. Also, don’t forget to let the local press know that the meeting will be taking place.

Hold a street stall

Street stalls are a really important way to reach out to members of the public about issues such as the arms trade. All that is required are some basic materials such as leaflets, petitions and posters, together with a fold up table and you’re pretty much in business.

Of course it can be quite daunting wondering if people are going to ask lots of difficult questions relating to the arms trade. However the vast majority of people are very supportive when they realise what the campaign is about. The best way to be prepared, if you are nervous about answering any questions, is by reading some of CAAT’s basic briefings (like the Fanning the Flames briefing in this pack). Top tips for running a stall are: always be polite, have at least two people to staff the stall, always have a “sign up for more info” sheet which you can send back to CAAT.

If they are very interested remember to get a contact telephone number – they might want to help you run the stall next time! And of course, don’t forget to contact the local media.

Carry out an opinion poll

This is a good way to try to get some local media coverage and could be undertaken in conjunction with a street stall. However you can undertake an opinion poll on the arms trade if you are at university, college, or school, a conference, or gathering, or any other place where you can ask people a couple of quick questions to get their opinion about the arms trade.

Enclosed with the Fanning the Flames pack is an opinion poll sheet, with some fairly simple questions to ask people and some other information about running a poll. Again, don’t forget to let the local media know about the poll – if you let them know in advance they might come and take a photo. Also don’t forget to let CAAT have the results of the poll!
Dear (Name of your MP),

I writing to express my growing concern that the government is fanning the flames of conflict around the world by its promotion of arms exports. In 2002, UK arms and military equipment was exported to over 150 countries.

Whilst the government regularly suggests that the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria ensures that UK arms and military equipment are not exported to regions of conflict, the record shows otherwise. Since 1997 when the Labour government was elected the UK has even licensed arms and military equipment to twenty countries engaged in serious conflicts such as Columbia, Nepal, India and Pakistan.

Since the creation of the Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) in the mid-1960’s, the UK has been promoting UK arms exports around the world. Rather than promoting defence and security however, the proliferation of weapons through the arms trade has undermined security, aided repression and caused economic problems, both for the poorest people in our world and for the international community as a whole. It is high time that DESO was closed and resources were put towards helping companies engaged in arms exports lessen their dependence on military production.

Since the Prime Minister himself has been so involved in promoting UK arms exports may I ask you to forward my letter to him asking for a reply.

Yours sincerely,

URGENT MESSAGE

To: Organisers and delegates of Defence Systems & Equipment International (DSEi) Arms Fair 2003

From: Name and address

I cannot be present at the CAAT protest today but wanted to send you the following message:

Please return to CAAT, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4 3HQ by 1st September 2003
Invitation to attend Protest against the DSEi arms fair

Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) would cordially like to invite you to attend the protest at this year’s DSEi arms exhibition, the largest arms fair in Europe.

- Protests will be held from 6th–12th September 2003 at the Excel Centre, Docklands, London.
- Speakers, NVDA, workshops.
- Please bring banners, placards, whistles, friends, local groups etc. All welcome.

More details will regularly appear on the CAAT website – www.caat.org.uk – or email martin@caat.demon.co.uk

Shut DSEi