



# Good For Us: The UK Arms Industry

August 2019

## **The Defence & Security Equipment**

**International (DSEI) Arms Fair 2019:** Involving 35,000 people, the DSEI arms fair will bring together arms companies and weapons buyers from all over the world, including some from the world's most oppressive regimes.

**Building peace:** True peace is not simply the absence of war. Responsible governments will seek to build the conditions and relationships that will enable arms control and disarmament to take place. This requires serious investment to tackle food and water insecurity, support human rights, combat gender discrimination, intervene early in insecurity and conflict with non-violent conflict resolution programmes and address climate change. Regrettably, the UK government's security strategy prioritises military spending over conflict prevention.

**Supporting the UK defence industry:** In March this year the Ministry of Defence publicised the contribution it made to the UK's prosperity through defence contacts. [The Ministry of Defence invested £18.9bn with UK industry in 2017/18.](#) That sum well exceeds total UK spending on international development and humanitarian aid (£14.1bn

in 2017) that is crucial to reducing the risk of future conflict. £18.9bn represents only half of annual UK defence spending.

## **Disproportionate support for the defence industry:**

The government wants to establish the UK as the world's second largest arms exporter. The UK defence industry is highly enmeshed with the offices of Government. The largest defence companies make enormous profits and their senior executives take home huge salaries and bonuses. Yet the Government provides the industry with disproportionate support and subsidy. UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) has 8 staff to support trade and investment in the UK's education sector and 13 to support healthcare services but employs 122 officers support the defence export industry.

## **The UK's reliance on defence exports affects our diplomacy and influence**

**abroad:** The UK is currently allocated the responsibility by the UN Security Council for drafting Security Council resolutions on the war in Yemen and for negotiating with Saudi Arabia and other parties to the conflict in this respect. This task is made

more difficult as Saudi Arabia is the largest single purchaser of UK arms. This provides the government of Saudi Arabia with leverage over UK foreign policy positions.

**Bombing of civilian areas of Yemen with BAE Systems aircraft:** Our church leaders have appealed to the UK government to cease the sale of Typhoon jets to Saudi Arabia and to support an independent international investigation into crimes against humanity. In 2016 the Methodist President and Vice President stated that *“The UK Government’s policy is that export licences are not granted where there is a clear risk that arms/equipment might be used in the commission of serious violations of IHL. This risk is patently evident with respect to Saudi Arabia.”* The Foreign Secretary at the time, Boris Johnson, turned down these appeals and gave the green light to further sales of aircraft components, bombs and missiles. In 2018, the Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, [protested to the German government](#) when Germany imposed an embargo on arms sales to Saudi Arabia. In June 2019, a lengthy High Court action finally ruled on appeal that further UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia present a risk to human rights and consequently are illegal. The Campaign Against the Arms Trade, who brought the

court case, [welcomed the judges’ ruling but asserts that](#) *“it should never have taken a court case brought by campaigners to force the government to follow its own rules”*. Given its prioritisation of arms sales over human rights, the UK Government cannot escape the allegation that it has been complicit in the further civilian deaths resulting from the aerial bombing of civilian areas in Yemen.

**DSEI: Compromising human rights and fuelling corruption and oppression:** [In 2017, the governments of 56 countries sent delegations to the DSEI arms fair on the invitation of the UK Government.](#) These included a range of regimes with dismal human rights records: such as Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Vietnam. Our drive to sell arms is harming our standing on human rights and good governance.

**Faith-based protest at DSEI:** On Tuesday 3rd September 2019, faith groups and peace activists will come together at the ExCeL Centre to witness to peace and act against the arms fair under the banner of [No Faith in War](#).

[Visit here for more information.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Amber Rudd when questioned on the subject of arm sales to Saudi Arabia in a televised party leaders’ election debate in 2015, justified the sales on the basis of the UK manufacturing jobs that they provided.



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