

## Proposals to Control the Arms Trade More Effectively

The Social Responsibility Forum supports calls by organisations such as Saferworld, Oxfam and Amnesty International for:

1. An International Arms Trade Treaty.
2. Strict implementation of existing UK arms export criteria and the strengthening of these criteria, including for components.
3. A blanket presumption to deny arms sales to all countries involved in conflict or oppression, or where their sustainable development would be affected. A company would have to prove why this presumption did not apply in any particular instance.
4. Prior parliamentary scrutiny of arms sales.
5. Specific and implemented controls over UK companies' brokering and licensed production abroad.
6. End use monitoring to prevent diversion of arms to other states or for use in terrorism.
7. An end to Government subsidies and promotion of UK arms sales.
8. (a) The diversion of these subsidies into **alternative employment** and new businesses, and  
(b) Money and time given to **researching and planning for conversion from arms production.**

These are especially important in areas currently heavily reliant on arms trade employment - local economies must be strengthened and arms trade employees given genuine new employment opportunities.

### For discussion:

**Do you support these ideas?**

**If so, what can your church do to help put them into practice?**

**(E.g. raise them with your MP and parliamentary candidates; support the development of alternative non-arms trade employment.)**

### Disinvestment

The Social Responsibility Forum urges all Churches to disinvest from the arms trade. A variety of ethical investment funds are now available.

### For discussion:

**Does your Church invest in companies that trade in arms?**

**(Several denominations have disinvested; others invest below a certain percentage of military work; check at [www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk))**

**Do you invest unintentionally in such companies, e.g. through your pension fund, share ownership, etc? Should you reinvest ethically?**

Further information: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) [www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org) [www.sipri.se](http://www.sipri.se)  
[www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk) [www.saferworld.org.uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk) [www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org)



## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FORUM

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## The Arms Trade: A Discussion Document for the Churches of Cumbria

### Introduction

The Social Responsibility Forum (SRF) of Churches Together in Cumbria brings together representatives of the different Christian denominations and of various ecumenical groups to share information and pursue ecumenical action on a wide variety of social issues.

The SRF recently spent a day looking at issues around the arms trade. This discussion document aims to share some of these issues and questions with church members across Cumbria.

### Arms Trade Facts<sup>1</sup>

500,000 people worldwide are killed in armed conflict each year; that's one person every minute.

There is one gun for every ten people in the world.

£13 billion is spent on the global arms trade each year.

The 5 permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (USA, UK, Russia, France, China) are the top five arms exporters, accounting for 88% of the trade.

Britain is the second largest exporter, selling arms to the majority of other countries in the world.

More than 60% of all arms sales are to 'developing' countries; Britain is their 2<sup>nd</sup> largest provider, after the USA.

### For discussion:

**Did you know about Britain's role in the global arms trade?**

**Does it worry you? Why/why not?**

**How do you think it fits with the Christian Gospel?**

<sup>1</sup> Information from:  
Amnesty International, Campaign Against the Arms Trade,  
Oxfam, Saferworld

## Arms Trade Sites in Cumbria

*RO Defence, BAE Systems, Barrow*

RO Defence exports high explosives, artillery, guns, mortars and rocket launchers to about 50 countries.

*Customer Solutions and Support, BAE Systems, Barrow*

CS&S gives logistical support, training and instruction to BAE Systems export customers, e.g. in Saudi Arabia and India.

*QinetiQ, Eskmeals Range, Millom*

QinetiQ markets weapons research and development to armed forces worldwide. Eskmeals is a test range.

*Oxley Group, Ulverston & Barrow*

Oxley sells high technology lighting systems to armed forces, e.g. for night flying of military aircraft.

### For discussion:

**Is there an arms trade site near you?**

**Do you or someone in your family work in the arms trade?**

**In either case, what questions and tensions does this raise for you?**

## Arms Trade Controls on Paper

There is no international treaty controlling the arms trade, but Britain took the lead in introducing a European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Sales in 1998, and passed an Export Control Act in 2002.

Export Criteria in Britain now state that the Government will not issue an arms export licence if:

- ◆ There is an international embargo in place, or
- ◆ There is a clear risk that they be used for internal repression, or
- ◆ They would provoke or prolong armed conflict or aggravate existing tensions, or
- ◆ There is a clear risk that they would be used aggressively against another country, or
- ◆ There is a risk that they be used against the UK, or
- ◆ The buyer supports terrorism or crime, or
- ◆ There is a risk the export will be diverted, or
- ◆ The export would seriously hamper sustainable development.

### For discussion:

**Do you think it is morally right to sell arms at all?**

**If so, what criteria do you think should be used to decide whether an export licence is given?**

## Arms Trade Controls in Practice: the Problems

1. The UK Government has interpreted its own export criteria very loosely. In the last few years licences have been granted for:
  - \* dictatorships and countries engaged in serious internal repression e.g. China, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia;
  - \* countries where there are civil wars e.g. Colombia, Nepal;
  - \* countries engaged in regional conflict where there is a danger of war e.g. India and Pakistan;
  - \* very poor countries that do not need and cannot afford the arms e.g. Tanzania.

Control over the export of components is even laxer than for finished arms. It also seems that we have not learnt from past arms sales that were subsequently used against Britain, e.g. to Iraq and Afghanistan in the 1980s. Several of Britain's current export markets display the same warning signs that were ignored then, e.g. Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

2. The Government is responsible for control but also puts much money and staff time into promoting arms sales, so its regulatory position is highly compromised.
3. The UK arms trade is heavily subsidised from taxation: we pay £420 million p.a.; £4600 per job<sup>1</sup>, mainly through the underwriting of arms sales by the Export Credit Guarantee Department.
4. The Government is not using the powers it already has to control arms brokering; i.e. the negotiation by UK companies of arms deals between a foreign supplier and a foreign government or armed group, where the goods do not pass through Britain.
5. No powers have been introduced to control 'licensed production'; i.e. a UK arms company selling the right to produce its weapons to a company in another country.
6. Parliament only gets to hear about arms exports after permission has been given and so does not have the right to veto proposals.

### For discussion:

**What would you like to see done to ensure that UK arms are not used to fuel war, abuse human rights or divert money from development?**

<sup>1</sup> Statistics from 'The Subsidy Trap', Oxford Research Group & Saferworld, 2001