



# MoD's 'N' Wreckers

This weekend, thousands of terrorists from all over the world will be descending on the ExCel Centre in London's Docklands for the DSEI Arms Fair.

To greet them will be one million pounds worth of security – paid for by the taxpayer. Two thousand officers from the Met, 300 British Transport Police, City of London police officers, Ministry of Defence police, plain clothes detectives, security guards and specialists from the Met's marine, dogs and horse units, have all been drafted in. Not to arrest those selling weapons of mass destruction but to protect those same, poor, arms dealers from demonstrators who've vowed to try and shut down this 'trade in death.'

Welcome to the Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi - pronounced dicey) Exhibition 2003, Europe's biggest arms fair. Opening the fair will be Minister of War Geoff Hoon, while delegations from no less than sixty countries will have their accommodation and board paid for by the taxpayer while they shop for weapons. Somewhat astutely, a senior officer from the Met says they are anticipating a "major public order headache."

The UK arms industry accounts for 20% of world weapon sales and after agriculture is the most heavily government subsidised industry. Scientists for Global Responsibility (SGR) say that MoD spending on research and development has increased by 27% over the last year. Dr. Stuart Parkinson, SGR Director said: "Much of the MoD's research and development is geared towards making weaponry, sometimes for export to regimes with bad human rights records. It would be much more ethical to use the scientific expertise to accelerate, for example, the development of environmentally-friendly technologies."

At the first DSEi in 1999, two separate breaches of the International Landmines Act were uncovered by journalists. And in 2001, as planes were crashing into the World Trade Centre, 14 different Middle Eastern nations were shopping for weapons at the Excel Centre, side by side with the US, Israel, Australia and the UK. While thousands of other events around the world were cancelled out of respect for the dead, DSEi stayed open and arms dealers clocked up sales to Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the US, Colombia, China and Russia. sales to Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the US, Colombia, China and Russia.

## Fluffy DSEi

Poor human rights record? There are two invitation lists to DSEi, the official MoD list, which this year includes feuding neighbours India and Pakistan, Turkey, Russia, and 'axis of evil' state Syria. Then there's the organisers, Spearhead Ltd.'s, own secret list, over which the MoD has consultation but ultimately no control.

Spearhead have invited Afghanistan, Angola, Tanzania, and Israel. No cash for health and education? Well DSEi has something for everyone. The whole of next Thursday (11th) is dedicated to a conference called 'Making Defence Affordable?'

The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) is stunned: "Following controversy about the UK licensing a £28million military air traffic control system to Tanzania, which it neither needs nor can afford, it is disturbing that Tanzania - one of the very poorest countries in the world - has been invited to buy yet more arms." Martin Hogbin, of CAAT underlines the obvious hypocrisy at work at DSEi: "If the UK was serious about developing a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine, we would not promote sales of more arms into the region."

Companies exhibiting, alongside weapons giants Lockheed Martin and BAE, include Bulgarian small arms firm Arsenal Company which is reported to have sold £5-6 million of arms to Chad and Angola, as well as supplying arms to Sierra Leone in breach of the UN embargo. "Many of these companies have been fingered for shipping arms, sometimes illegally, into regions of terrible conflict like the Congo" says Hogbin. Others manufacture some of the most brutal and indiscriminate weapons in the world, including landmines and cluster bombs. At least two producers of depleted uranium shells will be exhibiting this year.

## CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For getting run over during an anti war sit down protest in Bristol. "A red jeep type vehicle mounted the central reservation between the lanes of traffic and drove through the crowd, only narrowly avoiding hitting anyone" said a bystander. "Whilst we were all staring in disbelief a smaller car tried to follow, failed to mount the reservation and ploughed straight into the people sitting down." One man who was knocked onto the bonnet of the car and driven along for 50 yards has now received a summons for 'vehicle interference'!

In a half-arsed attempt at political correctness, Spearhead have asked exhibitors not to display cluster bombs at DSEi! According to UNICEF, more than 1000 children have been injured by cluster bomblets and other unexploded weapons since the 'end' of the war in Iraq. Of course, cluster bombs can still be bought at DSEi, just not displayed, and like everything else on sale there they will not be subject to UK export controls.

In the run up to DSEi activist groups have been targeting exhibiting UK companies, such as Fluent in Sheffield and Cambridge Consultants. Two weeks ago Spearhead's head office in New Malden was occupied, and on Monday protesters - bound together by arm tubes - blockaded the gates to the ExCel Centre for five hours, preventing tanks being delivered to the exhibition. Police used cutting equipment to remove the tubes and a number of people were arrested under charges of obstructing the highway.

The police have promised to treat demonstrators "in the same sort of way as the May Day riots" and have been issued blanket stop and search laws under the Terrorism Act 2000. That's obviously because people protesting about weapons that kill and maim are just bloody terrorists that need to be stamped on – whereas those poor souls trying to earn an honest living by selling weapons that kill and maim – well, they need all the love, affection and money we can throw at 'em.

## Become part of the "major public order headache" and help shut down the arms fair.

Actions begin this Saturday (6) and go on all week with everything from critical mass bike rides and reclaim the streets to storming the centre to chatting to those nice arms dealers (dress smart for this one) For more on the events call 07817 652 029 or check out [www.dsei.org](http://www.dsei.org)



\* Comedian Mark Thomas will be opening the Convergence Centre this Saturday 7pm followed by music from Cello Man. The Centre is at Kingsley Hall, Powis Rd., London E3 (Bromely-by-Bow tube).

\* For indepth info about the arms trade and DESi contact Campaign Against Arms Trade 020 7281 0297 [www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk)

\* The Legal, Defence and Monitoring Group will be holding legal workshops at the Convergence Centre this Sunday (7) 10:30pm-12noon and Monday (8) 4-5:30 pm. [www2.phreak.co.uk/ldmg/index.php](http://www2.phreak.co.uk/ldmg/index.php)

\* To keep up to date with the protests [www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk)

DISARM DSEI

## Bright Sparks

With the switch of a key the emergency electricity generator which had been supplying the London Underground for nearly 100 years was turned off by New Labour Transport Minister John Spellar. Seeboard Powerlink would now be in charge of operations and Spellar announced that this Private Finance Initiative scheme was a "good example of the public and private sectors working together to improve services for travellers in London." That was last October, 11 months later people found out just how much the service had improved. Thousands of people on the Underground were plunged into darkness for 40 minutes, traffic lights failed, trains ground to a halt, lights went out in buildings...all thanks to a lack of emergency back-up and what the Mayor of London and unions blamed on cost cutting by the private companies. Meanwhile railway cowboys Balfour Beatty (see SchNEWS 356) and property company Circadian will shortly be developing the area around the old power station with luxury flats worth some £500 million thank-you-very-much.

## R.I.P.

30 year old Israfil Shiri, a destitute young Iranian man had been on a life support for five days before he died early Wednesday morning. Israfil had set himself on fire in the offices of Refugee Action in Manchester, suffering burns to 80% of his body. He told his friends he would do it to prove that this government cares more about animals than people fleeing torture and persecution. In Iran, Israfil was in the military when he and his family were persecuted because he refused to follow orders that involved harming innocent people. He suffered from a complicated medical condition and since his application for asylum was rejected over a year ago, he has been refused any medical treatment, has been made homeless from his Salford council flat and has received no benefits or support. Reza Moradi of the International Federation of Iranian Refugees said, "Once you see you are facing deportation to jailers of the Islamic regime - you can't have a solicitor, you have no house to live in, you can't work, that is enough for people to commit suicide, or do something like this." More info 0161-881-7352 mark.krantz@ntlworld.com

\* There's going to be a chained procession to Yarl's Wood detention centre, re-opening after it was unfortunately burnt down last year (see SchNEWS 419). Meet 12 noon John Howard Memorial statue, St. Paul's Square, Bedford on Sunday 28th September. 07786 517379 sady\_campaign@yahoo.co.uk

\* Group4, the jokers that run the centre have been running a job advert in a local paper "This job is so different. The satisfaction I get from helping people is great." Er, locking people up who've haven't committed any crime apart from wanting a better life is 'satisfying'?

\* People are needed to take part in 'This Is Camp X-Ray' a new art installation consisting of a fully operational, life-size replica of the U.S internment camp at Guantanamo Bay, that will appear in Manchester city centre from Friday 10th October. www.uhc-collective.org.uk/

## DSEi Diary

**Friday to Tuesday** - NVDA Training \*\* **Friday 5th** - Press conference about protests \*\* **Saturday 6th** - "No Arms Fair" Unity March \*\* **Sunday 7th** - Start of "Disarm DSEi" conference \*\* **Monday 8th** - Silent vigil at ExCel centre, day two of "Disarm DSEi" conference \*\* **Tuesday 9th** - Protest at Custom House, "Fluffy DSEi" non-violent direct action, day

## HMP Woodhill

On 16th July, six prisoners at HMP Woodhill's Close Supervision Centre (CSC) A wing were refused exercise due to the hot weather. That night, four prisoners demonstrated their frustration by destroying their cells which resulted in a visit by the riot squad and a serious beating. In June, Glenn Wright, a prisoner on A-wing, wrote: "Who took the decision to add to our depression the daily rigours of isolation, and lack of healthy stimulation when this is contradictory to all medical remedies for depression known to mankind?"

Some of the prisoners at Woodhill CSC are under 24-hour CCTV watch and many are allowed only one hour's exercise a day. Some cells are unlocked only in the presence of six prison officers in full riot gear and interviews with psychologists are overseen by six prison staff. Recently, complaints have been limited to one a week because it was considered that some prisoners were 'abusing the privilege'?

In February the Chief Inspector of Prisons published a report on conditions at the CSC at HMP Woodhill in Milton Keynes. Opened in 1998, this 'jail within a jail' was designed to house around 50 of the most potentially disruptive inmates, accused or convicted. One unit was closed, partly in response to a High Court ruling.

Even last year's report showed that the basic needs of prisoners were being seriously neglected, in particular with regard to medical care, education and exercise, and expressed concern at the risk to the mental health of inmates. It concluded that "Control still dominated the system and personal development opportunities were relegated to the margins."

It is no surprise then that violent demonstration, self-harm and suicide are serious problems at Woodhill. Glenn Wright identifies insomnia, disrupted relationships, bullying, boredom, enforced idleness, and the prospect of a long and meaningless sentence devoid of hopes and plans, as contributing factors to the problem. He says: "What I'm trying to say is through many months of isolation and oppressive conditions, uncertainty, lack of communication, support, I find it difficult to be quiet."

For more information 0121 554 6947 www.mojuk.org.uk / Complain to Margaret Adams, Head of CSC, HMP Woodhill, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK4 4DA

Send letters to Glen P Wright, RT3785 HU6 Close Supervision Centre, HMP Woodhill, Milton Keynes, Bucks, MK4 4DA

\* The parents of 26 year old Tony Hickmott, who is certified autistic, cared for their son at home until respite care stopped at 19 and they were told he would be better off in a residential home. He was then moved 300 miles to a home in Wales. When his parents complained about the standard of care he was eventually moved closer to home but was placed in one secure psychiatric unit after another and sectioned. Despite being told Tony was to be housed appropriately and close to home in Brighton, his parents now have restricted access to their son, currently in Canterbury, and are seriously concerned for his welfare. They are desperately in need of legal representation. If you can help call Pamela Hickmott on 01273 270713.

## SchNEWS in brief

**Attempts to make the UK GM free could breach EU law.** This emerged this week after the European Commission refused a plea by Upper Austria to pass a law banning GM crops in their region. Upper Austria wanted to protect their organic and traditional agriculture against risk of cross fertilisation but were told that they had no new scientific evidence. Greenpeace genetic engineering expert Thomas Fertil says Austria may go to the European Court of Justice to appeal. This weekend Downing Street appointed ex-adviser to Monsanto, David Hall, as their communications advisor. \*\* There's a public meeting '**The Fake Emergency: Mass-Media Propaganda in the so-called War on Terror**' on 11 September at the NUJ HQ, 314 Grays Inn Rd WC1, (nearest tube Kings X) 6.30pm. Speakers include human rights lawyer Gareth Peirce call 020 7586 5892 estella24@tiscali.co.uk \*\* For a list of places where our new(ish) book '**Peace de Resistance**' is available from click onto [www.schnews.org.uk/peacederesistance/distrolist.htm](http://www.schnews.org.uk/peacederesistance/distrolist.htm) If you can think of anywhere else that might like to stock it (or copies of SchNEWS) get in touch with the office. \*\* Check out **Sounds like Freedom** news and opinion from Jenin, Occupied Palestine. [www.soundlikefreedom.org](http://www.soundlikefreedom.org) \*\* Iraq expert **Milan Rai** is going on a speaking tour of the UK to plug his new book '**Regime Unchanged**', starting this Saturday 6th at a CND Conference at Birmingham University and including a date in Brighton on the 11th. For details of the tour go to [www.j-n-v.org](http://www.j-n-v.org) \*\* Four people who are using "lawful excuse" for disabling, or attempting to disable, planes and support equipment at **Fairford Air Force base** will hear the procedures for the trial on September 19th. It's at Gloucester Crown Court and support is welcome. More info call 0117 9466885 \*\* **Space Invaders** is a play based on the events that took place at the **Aspire Autonomous social centre in Leeds** last November. There's two showings on September 13th and 14th at Wrangthorne Church Hall, Hyde Park, Leeds 8pm. Donations on the door - bring yer own booze. For more listings visit **Party & Protest** [www.schnews.org.uk/pap/](http://www.schnews.org.uk/pap/)

## Positive SchNEWS

A group of activists and performers is planning to take a circus and funfair to Iraq in January 2004 to bring a little colour and playfulness to the children of Iraq who have been traumatised by the war and who are still without many basic amenities. To get the circus and performers to Iraq the group still needs to raise several thousand pounds. If you want to make a donation or help organise benefit gigs, cabarets, café nights, mass busks etc. please go to [www.circus2iraq.org](http://www.circus2iraq.org)

## ...and finally...

Ahoy, me hearty! SchNEWS be wishin' to tell ye, our landlubber friends, to celebrate International Talk Like a Pirate Day. Ye will talkin like this on the 19th or be a scurvey dog. Ye'll be wantin' to look round ye website: [www.thomasscott.net/yarr](http://www.thomasscott.net/yarr) in order to be learnin' about the day and how to be talkin' like a pirate proper. This here international grass roots movement will be taking the world by storm or hook line and sinker...

## Disclaimer

Ahoy, me hearties. SchNEWS gives all landlubbers fair warning us swashbucklers will be walking the plank 'though there be a storm a-brewing ahead. Treasure, there be too. Aye!

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