

WAKE UP!! IT'S YER CLOUGHING UP THE GOODS...

Weekly SchNEWS

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KOCH-A-HOOP

FROM NOTTINGHAM TO NORTH WAZIRISTAN AS SchNEWS COUNTS THE HUMAN COST OF THE ARMS TRADE

While a quick facts and figures check will reveal it to be quite a serious (or silly) exaggeration, Nottingham has been labelled the 'gun crime capital of Britain'. It's been compared to Al-Capone era Chicago and is dubbed 'Shottingham' by the certain sectors of the media. So, as we reported back in May (see SchNEWS 631), it's always seemed a bit of an ironic location for the UK headquarters of Heckler & Koch, the world's second-largest manufacturer of handguns, assault rifles, submachine guns, machine guns and grenade launchers. An irony not lost on 'Notts Anti-Militarism' who have been holding monthly protests outside H&K's office (Unit 3, Easter Park, Lenton Lane, Nottingham – for arms trade fans).

Last Saturday (29th) at Nottingham Market Square, NA-M came together with No Border Nottingham, who are part of the international network struggling for immigrant rights and promoting freedom of movement. The demo was entitled 'Full Circle – from weapons to wars to refugees', and focused on the links between the arms trade and the forced movement of peoples. It was attended by refugees from Sudan and Zimbabwe, who have survived the direct consequences of this deadly trade.

IMPORT/EXODUS

Small arms are not only responsible for the deaths of half a million people a year – three quarters of them civilian – they also contribute to the displacement of millions more fleeing armed conflict. Literally millions of these weapons are made by H&K and have been liberally distributed throughout the world. From its Nottingham-based UK headquarters the German company has shipped arms to war zones such as Bosnia and Nepal and licensed its weapons for production in such human rights friendly countries as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey. And that's just the legal sales.

While in 2002 the Labour government did finally bring in some restrictions to arms sales with the Export Control Act, the law is riddled with loopholes. It doesn't cover deals brokered by British companies if the arms don't pass through the UK, or arms produced overseas under licence from British companies. It also completely fails

to adequately monitor and control 'end-use' – where the weapons end up actually being used and by who. Essentially, with a little legal wizardry you can still sell to whomever you like.

As comedian Mark Thomas showed, getting round those pesky legal restrictions really isn't at all difficult, even if you're a cheeky cockney conman and not a real arms dealer at all. Thomas decided to do a little fictional gunrunning to Zimbabwe and using a front company, he contacted H&K-licensed companies based in Turkey, Pakistan and erm Iran. After checking that the arms were for the Zimbabwean military – Mugabe's boys – and not for rebels (you can't be too careful now), they all quite happily agreed to do a deal for a shipment of H&K MP5 sub-machine guns. The Pakistanis even offered a free gift; a snazzy holding bag for each gun if he took over 1000.

And it's not just repressive regimes. 75% of the world's small arms somehow or other find their way into the hands of criminal gangs and civilians, and H&K products are no exception. H&K guns have been found amongst gangs from Britain to Brazil. Even more serious is the role they have played in internal conflicts, especially in Africa, where they have made appearances amongst

NOTTINGHAM FOREST GOES BALLISTIC

I WANT A GRENADE LAUNCHER FOR THE GOALKEEPER AND TWO G3 RIFLES FOR THE FULLBACKS!!



a number of non-state armed groups. H&K weapons have been found being used by child soldiers in the Congo and by the Janjaweed in Darfur, where the H&K G3 rifle is rivalling the AK47 as the weapon of choice of the marauding militias.

So what happens when you, legally or otherwise, ship vast quantities of small arms to conflict zones? According to the UN Refugee Agency, "armed conflict is now the driving force behind most refugee flows." There's currently an estimated 16 million refugees worldwide, a number that has risen considerably in the last two years. Topping the list of source countries is, of course, Iraq, although also on the increase is the number of refugees fleeing Afghanistan, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although the vast majority (over 80%) only make it to bordering countries, of those who do make it as far as applying for asylum in the top 44 industrialised nations, around 9% come to Britain.

This year the government has been involved in High Court actions to secure its right to deport Zimbabweans and Congolese asylum seekers and in July it lifted its ban on deporting Sudanese applicants. Meanwhile 88% of Iraqis that apply for asylum in Britain are rejected at the initial decision-making stage. And for those that get to stay? Daily Mail demonisation and crappy weather.

The correlation between destinations of arms sales, countries we've stuck our military oar into and refugee numbers seems obvious but, for some reason, is rarely mentioned. Fortunately, with actions like Full Circle in Nottingham and others like it around the country, there are plenty of people not only willing to join the dots but also to bring home the real life costs of the arms trade.

* For more see: <http://nottsantimilitarism.wordpress.com/heckler-koch> and www.nobordersnottingham.org.uk

FIGHT TRUTH DECAY

WHACK-A-MOLE

*First they came for the chavs,
but I don't wear tracksuits
Then they came for Muslim Jihadists,
but I can't even grow a beard
Then they came for Animal Rights campaigners,
but I like buying L'oreal products
Then they came for Eco-campaigners,
but I don't believe in climate change
Then they came for the toffs...*

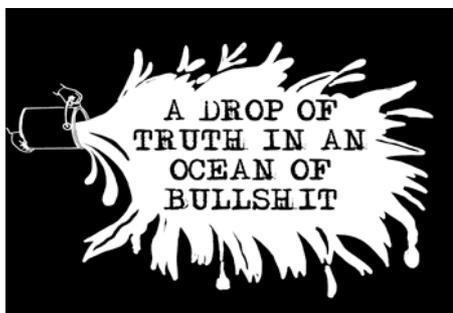
Hard not to feel a moment of schadenfreude when you hear about a top Tory MP getting arrested, but this time it looks like the chickens have come home to roost for a government (and compliant 'opposition') that's comfortable with a Mugabe-esque use of maximum force against any dissenters. Of course, as anyone who reads SchNEWS the right way up will know, the Man has been putting the boot in to any of us unwashed and unwaged masses that dare to challenge the government's many injustices.

Damian Green MP was arrested for 'misconduct in public office' (er, when have politicians done anything else?). To add to his humiliations, he was held for nine hours, his house and offices raided and his phone and laptop seized by the Met. We can only imagine his futile calls of "...but don't you know who I am?" as he was hauled away.

But, gloating aside, it just goes to show that what starts as a crackdown on animal rights activists, chavs and Muslims is really just the no-holds barred accumulation of power for power's sake by the state.

The actual nature of Green's whistle-blowing is fairly trivial (we're not talking about the Dreyfus affair or Iranian Nukes here, just some everyday stuff about the Neo-Labours' fears of immigrants and recession) but it looks like even those blessed with parliamentary privilege just aren't looking quite so privileged if they step out of line.

Unfortunately, rather than sparking any kind of real debate along the lines of "hang on, hasn't this gone a bit too far now?" it looks like all it might do is revive the flagging career of David Davis, the Tory boy who talks like someone's given him a spliff and a copy of *SchNEWS At Ten* to read. And what's the betting that, when/if any of these would-be libertarian Tories get their grubby mitts to the top of the greasy pole of power they'll find that they too start seeing enemies of freedom everywhere, especially when their favourite type of freedom is the freedom to screw the rest of us over to line their pockets.



OD'd on EDO

All serious charges have been dropped against those prosecuted for Brighton's 'Carnival Against the Arms Trade' in June (See SchNEWS 634). The campaign is directed at the local EDO MBM arms factory in Moulsecoomb. Fourteen people are currently facing charges in Brighton Magistrate's Court, but in the first hearing held on Tuesday (November 24th), prosecutor's attempts to land counts of 'conspiracy' and 'violent disorder' were eventually dropped for all the accused. Only minor charges still stand.

It is likely that the conspiracy and violent disorder convictions, which would have to be taken to Crown Court and heard in front of a jury, were withdrawn because there is no evidence to prove the charges. A lone Magistrate however may be able to push through the minor convictions.

One of those accused says "police have used excessively inflated offences to arrest people. If they just wanted to arrest people for minor charges there would be no need for the disproportionate use of police force and surveillance". The Sussex police used batons, pepper-spray and dogs against campaigners at the protest, some people were hospitalized. Thirteen homes were raided.

One protester at the campaign said "unfortunately it became less like a carnival and more like a police chase." At the recent SHUT EDO/ITT demonstration in October (See SchNEWS 651) a journalist was bitten on the balls by a police dog.

A person on trial says the police raided their houses - and their parents home - taking a computer, address book, diary and clothes. When subsequently arrested by a snatch squad they were held in a cell for twelve hours and strip-searched.

The unnecessary charges bought against the campaigners legitimises police action, makes newspaper headlines and attempts to undermine the anti-arms trade campaign. It not only violates the right to protest, but increasingly encroaches on individual freedoms. The right to cause damage in order to prevent greater damage can be rendered lawful, and direct action is beginning to gain legitimacy in court. On June 11th 2008, by unanimous verdict, the Raytheon 9 (see www.raytheon9.org) were found not guilty of three counts of criminal damage after no evidence could be brought against claims that they acted to prevent war crimes during the Lebanon war by the Raytheon-equipped Israeli armed force.

* On Wednesday (November 26th) four protesters who glued themselves to the entrance of EDOs second plant in Fishersgate were convicted for aggravated trespass. However they only copped conditional discharges with no costs being awarded against them.

* See www.smashedo.org.uk



GET IT E.ON

Across the UK climate change organisations and activists staged 48 hours of action against E.ON Corp – the energy giants funding new coal fired power stations.

Last weekend's actions ranged from 'greenwash guerrillas' at E.ON offices in London to a 'die in' – a mass extinction of activists disguised as animals - outside a Brighton shopping centre.

Numerous groups targeted The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) for buffering E.ON with massive loans. Outside RBS in Bristol, and in Norwich, campaigners set up stalls manned by fake E.ON staff telling real E.ON facts about new coal. One group in Brighton dressed up as cleaners and tried to scrub their RBS clean.

At the FA Cup's HQ (the FA is sponsored by E.ON) an eco-football squad, sporting t-shirts showing pictures of new coal stations, turned up to lobby staff and the public.

The F.OFF prize however goes to the protesting Santas, who turned 48 into 96 hours, occupying E.ON HQ in Coventry. Some entered the building, toured the offices and crashed board meetings. Others blocked the front, gluing themselves to the entrance and dumping sacks of coal in the revolving door.

E.ON corp is funding the first of seven new coal power stations planned to be built in the UK. Not a single coal powered station has been built in the UK for over 30 years. (Read about this year's Climate Camp at Kingsnorth in SchNEWS 641).

The greenwash behind a push for new coal lies with the promise of so-called 'clean coal'. Which is a farce as the idea behind 'clean coal' is premised on 'carbon capture and storage' – catching the carbon dioxide released after burning coal and burying it underground – technology which does not exist yet. Coal is still the dirtiest form of energy supply.

* The UK government are hovering above the big red GO-ahead button for new coal power plants. Join the National Climate March in London this Saturday (December 6th) and say NO to NEW COAL. The march begins at Grosvenor Square 12 noon and ends in Parliament Square. It is aimed to co-inside with the United Nations Climate Change Conference, currently being held in Poland from 1st-12th December 2008.

* For more see www.risingtide.org.uk

SOMALI-ARGH

FROM PENZANCE TO PUNTLAND AS SchNEWS TAKES TO THE HIGH SEAS OF SOMALI PIRACY

The four horsemen of civil war, occupation, famine and epidemic disease are barely enough to warrant attention from the worlds press, but, capture a ship-load of oil and suddenly the whole world's crying Somalia! Something ought to be done about the problems in Somalia. By 'something must be done,' of course, governments businesses and their loyal hangers-on (known locally as the free press) mean of course that the scourge of modern day piracy off the Horn of Africa) must be defeated by military force as it threatens the free flow of goods (especially oil) between the Middle East and Europe (via that old colonial hub, the Suez Canal).

Free trade-friendly regimes around the world are demanding that the Somali government step in and act decisively against the pirates. One slight problem though... there is no Somali government. Well, to be more accurate, there are anywhere between six and several dozen Somali 'governments' all in various stages of war and mutual non-recognition. There was something like a Somali government, which briefly controlled Mogadishu and most of Somalia, known as the Islamic Courts Union. They were destroyed by joint US and Ethiopian fire-power in late 2006. The latest spike in piratical activity (as well as the latest round of civil war and insurgency) pretty much dates from back then (see SchNEWS 567 & 585).

Somalia's pirates mostly operate out of the semi-autonomous Puntland region, which lies in the relatively sparsely populated north of the country. De-facto independent since 1991, Puntland has remained (mostly) free of political violence, more or less staying out of the country's 17 year long civil war. When countries such as Britain aren't idiotically pushing for sanctions against the all but non-existent central government, they're demanding that Puntland (one of the world's poorest and weakest states) stamp down on the pirates themselves.

Realpolitik-savvy types point out that tax on the pirates is now the Puntland authority's main source of cash, and that the pirate gangs have access to more fire-power than the government has - and they aren't afraid to use it.

Dig a little deeper than the foreign policy wonks dare to go, you find that the Puntlanders tell a slightly different story. They tell of big-business fishing trawlers riding roughshod over their traditional fishing grounds, overfishing and intimidating locals who tried to fish in their own waters.

Just as Somali fishermen in small boats found themselves unable to compete against these giant fish factories, they found that the combination of small boats, rope ladders and Kalashnikovs (none of which are in short supply in coastal Somalia) were just the ticket for getting a bit of 'compensation' from the trawlers. From boarding fishing vessels it was just a skip and a jump to hijacking the massive cargo ships that ply the route between the Mediterranean, Middle East and South Asia.

With no central authority to stop them, these modern day motley crews have gotten bolder and bolder as they operate on the high seas - further and further from the Somali coastline, now striking targets in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. This year they've capture headlines with the vessels that they've taken. Back in September they captured a Ukrainian vessel full of tanks and rocket launchers, and then they topped even that a few weeks back with the largest ship ever captured by pirates, the 318,000 ton Saudi oil supertanker, the SIRRUS STAR. Having captured 1% of Saudi Arabia's oil output, they got to watch the value of their cargo increase as oil prices jumped up in fear.

Not only have Western governments promised to bring their warships to face the pirates (whose little boats are anyway much more agile than those of the British, Russian or US navies), but psychotic Muslim killing mercs Blackwater have threatened to put their oar in, offering to send their ship - the McArthur and its crew of ex-navy SEALs to patrol the Gulf of Aden. Meanwhile, the pirates continue to benefit from the complete and utter chaos in the horn of Africa on the edge of the worlds' most important shipping lanes.

SHABAB RANKS

The Ethiopian government, which invaded Somalia to oust the Islamic Courts two years ago (alongside the largely fictitious Transi-

tional Federal Government) has been fighting (ie - losing) an Iraq-style insurgency ever since. Looking for a way out, the Ethiopians have been desperately trying to do deals with some of their erstwhile enemies, the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia.

As far as an intervention to quell a fundamentalist movement goes, the invasion of Somalia has become an even greater failure than the invasion of Afghanistan or Iraq. Whilst the Ethiopians try to peel off the 'moderate' insurgents, the Islamic Courts Militias are taking over town after town, and now directly control most of the south of the country. Their former military wing- Al Shabab (trans: 'The Youth') seem to have split off and are championing an even stricter form of religious intolerance than the original religious intolerance of the Islamic Courts. Clashes between the two groups have been reported. The Islamists effectively run a 'night government' of Mogadishu - passing judgements, training soldiers and collecting taxes under the noses of the Ethiopians and the Transitional Government.

As the Ethiopians plan to withdraw (perhaps the Ethiopian president has Bush's old 'Mission Accomplished' banner to wave somewhere), they're desperately seeking any semblance of non-enemy authority to hand over to. As they pull back from outlying districts, these areas are straight away recaptured by the Islamists, who bring with them their brand of peace at the cost of conformity to a strict Islam that's alien to Somalian tradition (although, just as was the case in 2006, Somalis often see this as preferable to the desperation that has been forced on them for the best part of a generation - see SchNEWS 567).

Meanwhile, the UN warns that the population of Somalia faces 'total destitution' next year if the political and military situation does not get better next year. As the Ethiopian government has just announced that it will delay troop withdrawals, and the West is much more concerned about the passage of Saudi oil and plastic Chinese crap past Somalia's shores, it looks like 2009 has the same mix of occupation and desperation that 2007 and 2008 had.

* For up to date info on Somalia, check out the Mogadishu-run Shabelle Media Network (when they're not being shut down by the government that is). <http://shabelle.net>



IF YOU'RE NOT PISSED OFF YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION

TACTICAL SABBATICAL

With the possibility of a Tory victory in the 2010 general election looming, repeal of the Hunting Act is a hot topic. Blatant illegal hunting is carrying on around the country and with the police claiming that they don't have the funds to enforce the ban, it could be all go for hunting to be legalised again.

If you didn't already know David Cameron is a fox hunter, so it isn't much surprise that he has stated that if he wins the next election he will do all he can to repeal the act. Some say that this would be impossible, but with a lot of highly placed and filthy rich people in favour of hunting who knows?

Even if the repeal failed, the fact that the would-be prime minister backs hunting means loopholes could be exploited and hunts will surely take it as a green light to carry on killing.

So what can counter money and influence in high places? Well, old fashioned back-to-its-roots sabbing, using actual direct action to sabotage hunts instead of the cat and mouse antics with video cameras currently employed by hunt monitors.

The next two years are going to be important in the hunting/sabbing world – and hunts are now resorting to anti-harassment laws to get injunctions placed on hunt sabs... er, monitors. So keep an eye out for what happens next or just get yer boots on, get out there and stop the chinless animal killers.

* For more see www.huntsabs.org.uk

SPIT AND POLISH

On November 11th the Polish far-right organisation ONR (Radical National Camp) – known for its extreme nationalism, anti-semitism and violent attacks on homosexuals – staged a march in the Polish capital Warsaw. In response, anti-fascists decided to protest using non-violent civil disobedience - blocking the street in front of the march to prevent the neo-nazis passing. Police formed a cordon around the protesters preventing them from taking any further action.

Following the protest several young people were summoned to police stations and, after refusing to testify, were threatened with court cases if they did not agree to accept unusually high fines – several times the normal amount.

Anarchist Solidarity is preparing to help with legal aid. People wishing to make contributions should contact them to obtain bank details: solanarch@gmail.com or anarchistsolidarity@yahoo.com

It is also calling on people to send a letter to the Interior Ministry and the President of Warsaw asking them not to repress the anti-fascists for their action of conscience. Send your letters, faxes or emails to...

* Grzegorz Schetyna, Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji, ul. Stefana Batorego 5, 02-591 Warszawa. fax (0-22) 845-00-20 minister@mswia.gov.pl

* Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, President of Warsaw, Urząd m.st. Warszawy, pl. Bankowy 3/5, 00-950 Warszawa, Fax: 022 595 30 52 biuroprezydenta@warszawa.um.gov.pl

PARTY & PROTEST

December - 5th - Review/Repeal Extradition Treaty - a chance for all people concerned about the current madly unfair UK/US extradition treaty to voice their opposition. US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, London W1, St James'/Green Park, W1A 2LQ. 5pm-7pm www.garymckinnon.co.uk

6th - Climate protest bike ride - around Central London joining up with the National Climate March at Grosvenor Square. All welcome. Decorate your bikes. Bring whistles. Bring music. Lincolns Inn Fields, Holborn, London, 10.30am, www.campaigncc.org/bikeride.shtml

6th - Regional Gathering: Climate Camp Cymru 2009 - Following the success of previous Camps for Climate Action at Drax Coal Power Station, Heathrow Airport and Kingsnorth Coal Power Station, is it time for our own event in Wales? 1pm – 5pm, Room B33, Glyndur University, Wrexham, Clwyd, Wales LL11 2AW Tel. 07886 719 873

6th - National Climate March - happening during the UN Climate Talks in Poznan in the run up to the Copenhagen talks in 2009. Grosvenor Square, London W1, 12.00 noon For directions- see website or contact office, nr Green Park Tube 020 7833 9311 www.campaigncc.org www.ecoveggie.org.uk

6th - Fundraiser for The Cowley Club - Prof Al Canown - DJ, Unite and Devise - punk, Mesagana - reggae funk blues and folk fusion. Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA. 8pm, £3 01273 696104 www.cowleyclub.org.uk

7th - No Sweat Annual Gathering 2008 - Looking at issues around sweatshops and the exploitation of cheap foreign labour. Featuring Mark Thomas exposing the truth about Coca Cola, Garment Worker Activists From Bangladesh, World Development Movement on rigged trade rules and more. With workshops, films and ways to get involved... Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS. nr, Mile End Tube, 10.30am – 5.30pm, £6/£4 (concs) available from No Sweat website or <http://wegottickets.com> 07904431959 www.nosweat.org.uk

8th - Feminist Reading Group - open to all genders. This month: 'What is gender anyway?'. To receive a reading pack email address below. Starts 7pm Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA 01273 696104 laurasterry@hotmail.com

10th - Save Dave Rave - Benefit gig for Dave Mahoney, the Brit arrested at the RNC protests in Minneapolis on September 4th 2008 and facing trumped up charges of Assault, and Conspiracy to Riot with a Furtherance of Terrorism; if convicted he could get up to 12 years in jail AND a \$24,000 dollar fine. (See SchNEWS 656). With Tubelord and Jim Lockey. 8pm, at The 2 Pigs, Church Street, Cheltenham, GL50 3HA. £4 - all proceeds to Save Dave campaign helpdavedamahoney.blogspot.com

14th Brighton Animal Action Xmas Fayre - With Sunday roast Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton. 12pm-6pm

For the full listings updated weekly see www.schnews.org.uk/pap

SchNEWS In Brief

* Protesting the auction of Iraqi oil to multinational companies, the **Hands Off Iraqi Oil** crew staged a 'Sale of the Century' protest outside the Iraq Petroleum Forum last Monday (1st December). While oil industry big wigs bashed out the details for controlling Iraq's oil reserves for the next 20 years, besuited and be-masked protesters held their own version of the carving up of Iraqi national resources outside the Millennium Gloucester Hotel in London. www.handsoffiraqoil.org

* Activists from around Yorkshire staged an **anti-ID card protest** last week at the Sheffield Home Office building. After chaining themselves to the general entrance they managed to prevent the members of the public entering the building for several hours until the area was cleared by police. Eleven activists were arrested but later released with a caution. www.indymedia.org.uk/en/regions/sheffield/2008/12/414234.html

...and finally...

"He gave of himself with intelligence and energy and devotion to duty. And his entire country owes him a debt of gratitude for that service" - Bill Clinton speaking at Richard Nixon's funeral in 1994

"It is Nixon himself who represents that dark, venal and incurably violent side of the American character that almost every country in the world has learned to fear and despise." - Hunter Thompson, Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail

Who was right, Slick Willy or the Duke of Gonzo? Well after this weeks release of some of the unedited versions of the infamous 'Nixon tapes', SchNEWS is leaning towards the good Dr (we were neutral before, honest). The release - the first in a series - comes after the Nixon presidential library passed into the hands of the National Archives. Previously it was controlled by Nixon supporters, complete with an exhibition on how Watergate was a stitch-up.

At times disturbing, at times hilarious, the tapes cover the 1972 election and the War in Vietnam. Highlights include Nixon calling Vice-Prez Spiro Agnew 'a goddamned fool' who 'bores the hell out of me' and telling Henry Kissinger 'The press is the enemy. The establishment is the enemy, the professors are the enemy. Write that on a blackboard 100 times and never forget it.' To which Kissinger snivels "Errm I'm a professor."

The records also amusingly document Nixon's pathetically insecure side, covering his campaign to have all images of previous presidents removed from all 35 rooms in the White House - even personally signed photos of JFK on the walls of lowly staffers.

The W tapes could be equally fascinating, but then again he wasn't so gung-ho about bugging the White House, just peoples' phones...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all readers - don't decide to do a double issue if you want an early night. Honest!

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