

Disrupting arms company recruitment



ACTION GUIDE

**CAMPAIGN
AGAINST
ARMS
TRADE**

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Why take action?



Every year the arms trade recruits thousands of graduates from UK universities, to design, build, market and sell the next generation of killing equipment. They spend a great deal of time and money trying to feed this constant hunger for graduates which is vital for their continued survival. This is a great weakness of arms companies and by reducing the number of students willing to be involved in making weapons we can cause real damage to arms companies. By preventing arms trade recruitment on your campus, you can lessen the damage the arms trade does- **so read on and find out how.**

The aim of this guide is to show students how to counter the arm trade's graduate recruitment by by disrupting its recruitment efforts and informing students about the arms trade.

E.ON F.OFF

In 2008 consistent student protests across the UK forced energy giant E.ON to abandon its recruitment tour of universities. In a similar way, we want to make it so difficult for companies like BAE and Qinetiq to recruit on campus that they stop coming!

Counter-recruitment action works, and with a sustained effort we can prevent arms companies from accessing students.

Whilst the arms trade recruits from almost all subject areas, the bulk of the graduates will be engineers and science students. Arms companies really struggle to recruit sufficient numbers of quality graduates, especially engineers. BAE Systems for example is buying up failing engineering firms principally for the staff, and ambulance-chasing companies that have announced redundancies (Chuter, Defense News, 2008, p. 6). It seems it has also lowered its entry requirements for its graduate recruitment program.

In February 2010 the Guardian reported that Rolls Royce was having trouble recruiting graduates. A growing number of engineering students are from abroad and return home at the end of their degree. Rolls Royce's Chief Executive Sir John Rose stated: "The supply of UK graduates is not as big as we would like. If we are going to grow the manufacturing base we need to grow the [skills] pool." (Webb, 2010). This clearly reflects the importance of graduates to companies and means that by disrupting their recruitment events we are having a direct impact on their ability to grow as a company. This makes it all the more satisfying when a successful counter-recruitment action takes place.

Students spoof an arms company stall



Why take Action

his guide suggests two main approaches to countering arms trade recruitment:

1. Informing students about the arms trade

By taking action against arms companies we hope to inform students about the issues surrounding the arms trade and hopefully dissuade them from getting involved with it. Increasing the stigma attached to working for an arms company will increase the difficulty it faces in recruiting good staff.

2. Disrupting recruitment events

By continuously disrupting arms company recruitment events you will be wasting their money and resources. Eventually it will become too costly for arms companies to recruit at universities if they are faced with constant protests. Take a careers fair- in running a stall an arms company may spend nearly £2000:

- Cost of stall: £1000
- Freebies: £200
- Staff pay, travel, lunch etc: £800+

By discouraging students from approaching the arms company stalls and from being interested in working for them you will be costing the arms companies a hefty amount!

Going along to an arms trade graduate recruitment event is effective, easy and fun. It is easy to show why arms companies should be banned from university campuses and to deter prospective graduate employees.

Companies to look out for:		
Atkins	AWE	BAE Systems
Detica	DSTL	GE Aviation
Lockhead Martin		MBDA
Rolls Royce	Qinetiq	Thales

In any campaign, the aim is to make it easier for people to say 'yes' to you than 'no'. If we are trying to discourage people from working for the arms trade, we should think about what factors motivate students to work for an arms company. This way we try to make it easier for them to say 'yes' to working for an ethical company. So:

What makes students want to work for an arms company?

- Believing that an arms company offers the best chance of a good career
- Feeling like there are few other options in their field of work
- The money
- The swish arms company presentation
- The arms company reps having time to talk to them and giving persuasive answers to their questions
- The buffet/drinks/tea and coffee/freebies provided by the arms company which make it feel like a nice place to work and which get people into a positive, receptive mood
- 'Cool' planes, guns and technology

What discourages students from working for an arms company?

- The moral and ethical implications
- Knowledge of the damage the arms company does
- The social stigma attached to producing weapons
- Wanting to have a career that benefits the world
- Not wanting to be in a career where they will face protests
- Knowing that there are other careers with better financial and ethical prospects.

Arms company events

What type of events do the arms trade run? (and how to disrupt them)

Stalls

What happens: In a building with a lot of students passing through (Students Union, Engineering Departments) or at a careers fair there will be a stall staffed by representatives from the arms company. They will be armed with a variety of pamphlets, some corporate graphics and often some freebies. They will want to do three things:

1. Get students to fill out an application form on-line, which is the first step of all the big corporations recruitment processes these days.
2. Encourage students to turn up to their evening presentation, where they can tell them how wonderful their arms company is.
3. Get students' email addresses, so they can badger them about on-line applications and evening presentations.

What to do about it: There are many ways to limit the effectiveness of a stall, ranging from leafleting the people going up to it, to actively dismantling the stall.

Actions that have been taken against arms company stalls include:

- leafleting the people going up to the stall and explaining why the arms company is destructive (this is one you can do by yourself, even if no one else turns up to the action);
- having a 'die-in' outside of the careers fair;
- dropping a banner from a university building or inside the fair;
- holding a religious service in front of the stall;
- dressing as grim reapers and standing next to the stalls;
- dismantling the stall and confiscating all the freebies;
- subvertising the freebies (with stickers) or replacing them with more 'appropriate' ones (like toy guns);
- upsetting the stall and pouring red paint over the materials;
- holding an alternative careers fair;
- wasting the reps' time so other students can't talk to them.

NB: Some of these actions may have more serious legal implications than others. See page 9 for more information on legal issues.

The grim reapers strike again at a BAE Systems stall



Arms company events

CASE STUDY *The stall hijackers*

Careers fairs provide the perfect opportunity to disrupt the arms' industry's sordid trade, and students in Sheffield have tried a number of different methods in our attempts to scupper their recruitment process. From banner drops to die-ins, all manner of approaches have been employed, but for me the most effective strategy is simply to dismantle their stalls, hijack their leaflets, and prevent them from doing what they are there to do.

The university held an event boasting stalls from BAE, QinetiQ and Rolls Royce, among others. At a planning meeting beforehand, we decided that given the high number of objectionable companies at the fair, the best result would be had if the stallholders were no longer able to operate after our 'visit'. Research was done into the layout of the fair, using maps freely available at the event, and we highlighted which stalls we were going to target. We decided to operate in groups of three, and this proved to be a good number – three people, working without restraint, can shut a recruitment stall down in about a minute.

On the morning of the fair, we convened in a local park, divided into groups, and equipped ourselves with enough bin bags to carry all of the offending literature. Dressed and acting as inconspicuously as possible, we entered the fair in our groups, and sauntered over to our assigned stalls. After a little confusion about when we were to start proceedings (it's probably best to start when you are ready, and not try to coordinate exactly with other groups), we began the task in hand. We approached the stand (QinetiQ in our case) and told the startled stall-holder that we'd come to help him close down for the day. At which point, one member of the team held the bin bags open while the others rapidly swept and flung any leaflets, giveaways and gimmicks in sight into the bags. When the table was clear, we began to pull the hoarding surrounding the stall down, with varying degrees of success, and fortunately noticed two full boxes of recruitment leaflets under the table. We grabbed these boxes, picked up our bin bags, and headed straight for the exit. As soon as we breached security, a member of our group armed with a megaphone began an attention-grabbing tirade against the motley crew of arms' companies at the fair.

Back in the park, we recycled the leaflets, distributed the complimentary mugs amongst ourselves, and nominated someone to send a press release with photographs to the student newspaper.

The remnants of the stall after students had intervened



Arms company events

Evening presentations

What happens: The arms company will rent out a room at a local bar or more likely in a university building. They will provide a minimum of tea and biscuits and maybe even wine and a buffet. They will give a swish presentation and then some recent graduates will talk through how their career has progressed to date, what weapons or weapons systems they have built and where they see themselves going. Then there will usually be a time for questions in a group, before time for individuals to talk to the reps one-on-one and enjoy the buffet. At this point students will begin to drift off.

What to do about it: Disrupting a company's presentation can be really effective in making it too costly (in terms of money spent and publicity) for a company to return and also in informing other students about the company. It is important to think about the impact you want to have and who your target audience is as some actions are more effective than others. Try not to sound preachy as this will most likely annoy people and turn them against you.

Also, most students will do anything for free food, so removing the free food/drink (especially if it is limited) is a good way to reduce the amount of students staying on for a chat with the reps from the arms company. A result of this can be a slap up meal and several rounds of drinks for you and your fellow activists.

Tactics at evening presentations have included:

- interrupting the arms company representatives and speaking over them with a megaphone;
- holding up pictures of victims from the conflicts that are being fought using the arms company's weapons and weapons systems;
- occupying the stage and not allowing the presentation to continue;
- booking out the event so that no real potential graduates attend;
- leafleting the people going into the presentation;
- asking awkward questions which expose the arms company;
- holding alternative presentations or events;
- wasting the reps' time - this is an especially effective tactic when a presentation has just ended, and they invite individuals to ask them questions one-on-one.

CASE STUDY *Wining and dining*

A group of students discovered that an arms company had booked a section of an expensive bar for an evening careers presentation. There were a limited number of spaces available and so our first step was to encourage our friends and fellow activists to book a place, even if they could not attend the event.

Once the arms company representatives had given their spiel about why their company is so great, there was a question and answer session and then a chance to talk individually at greater length with a rep whilst enjoying the free buffet.

Depending on people's strengths and experience, we:

Questioned the reps on the moral and ethical dilemmas of working for an arms company;

Asked 'Yes Men' style questions, like "Wow that bomb you showed me was so amazing, but how many deaths per dollar do you think you would get for that?" to point out the craziness of the industry;

'Disposed' of the buffet so there was less incentive for other students to stay;

Spent ages talking to the reps one-to-one so that other students would not be able to talk to them (quieter people are often really good at this);

Stood at the door just outside the bar (so that it was not private property) and handed out leaflets exposing the arms trade for what it is.

An action like this is always invigorating, but the added bonus of free food and booze (that you have to get rid of) made it a really enjoyable evening. We now have an official social every time the arms company turns up!

Arms company events

Material in careers departments and mock interviews

Did we mention that arms companies are desperate for engineers? Oh we did. Well one of their tactics is to offer free mock interviews, to engineers who are about to graduate.

What happens: In addition to offering interview practice and advice, arms companies also stock the careers department with lots of lovely leaflets and information, and may even provide academic departments with materials such as mouse mats.

What to do about it: You can keep the pressure on arms companies by subvertising their promotional materials (with stickers, leaflets or alternative posters for example).

You can also:

- distribute information about the companies that they wouldn't advertise themselves (check out the resources section and the CAAT website for in-depth information about specific companies)
- target the university and careers service with actions in protest to their continued support of arms companies

A careers fair die-in



If you have any other ideas or examples of successful actions then add them to our Universities Wiki at <http://wiki.caat.org.uk>

CASE STUDY *Introducing Grim Reapers to the arms trade*

We had a great day - we did the normal leafleting and petitioning of all the people entering and leaving the careers fair, we sold peace poppies and sent postcards off to MPs. We had some people dressed up as eye-catching zombies and others dressed up as corporate types promoting BAE Systems and handing out free sweeties (as recruiting companies do) which were in fact mutilated jelly babies. This worked very well as many students who avoided the protesters were willing to talk to the corporate-looking types. We had a samba band in the morning combined with some speeches. Then at 2.45pm, 11 grim reapers simultaneously appeared in the careers fair next to arms companies' stalls. Friendly photographers stood ready to photograph the reapers in the fair.

It was a really successful day - we got a good amount of local and student media coverage and raised a lot of awareness on campus. We were told by the police that at least one company pulled out of the fair due to there being a protest and the university careers service was not happy about the protest.

Tips for a successful action

Plan ahead!

Make sure everyone feels comfortable with what's going to happen and that people have different roles according to experience and strengths.

Arrange a photographer

Most of the methods we have outlined so far involve taking direct action- preventing arms company recruitment is the aim. However a great photo can make a great story. So if you are planning to publicise your action or try to get it into the media, having someone ready to take quality photos can make a big difference to the prominence of your action.

Upload your photos to the Universities Wiki (<http://wiki.caat.org.uk>) to share with other students and hopefully inspire more to take action.

If you send your photos to CAAT (media@caat.org.uk) we can help publicise the action nationally and show the scale of student campaigning around the country.

Send out a press release beforehand

If you want to get your story into the media, send out a press release before your action. This can be useful especially because universities are often sensitive to their local and student papers.

You can write your own press release or adapt a draft one which can be downloaded from the student wiki at <http://wiki.caat.org.uk> and send it out to local and student media.

Disarm Nottingham hold a die-in



Legal bit

With any action it is important to think about the legal issues concerning the action and possible outcomes and repercussions. Because universities are on private land they can at any time decide that you are trespassing and if you refuse to leave make you liable for arrest.

Check out the Activist's Legal Project's guide to campus protests for an in-depth and useful resource.
<http://www.activistslegalproject.org.uk/Campus%20law%20briefing.pdf>

It is really important that everyone feels comfortable with what they are doing and that they do not find themselves in a position that they did not expect. All protests require different roles, some with more risk of arrest than others. If people do not feel that they are ready to disrupt a presentation or actively shut down the arms companies' stalls then perhaps they would feel happier handing out leaflets or asking awkward questions during presentations. There are also really useful jobs like photographing the action or holding on to people's valuables that also need doing.

If your group would like to carry out the action as a CAAT group, please read our non-violence guidelines before doing so.

Any Questions?

What if I can't get near a stall?

You can still inform students about companies even if you aren't directly next to a stall. Stand outside the entrance and leaflet everyone going into the fair. If you want to get close to a stall either just to chat to the reps or do a stunt then try to look like an average student. The university is probably obliged to let you into a fair anyway so that you could look for your own job, whatever your political views. If you are after doing a stunt then you might want to consider options like concealing props in bags or under clothes and if there are a lot of you then stagger the times you are going in.

What if we can't get enough people along to protest?

You only need one or two people to make a big difference at an event - try handing out leaflets, it takes very little effort (get pre-made leaflets off the CAAT wiki). If you struggle to find numbers for one specific protest then have one or two people there all day to leaflet and set a time (that suits the most people) to gather your full numbers and have a rally with speeches (megaphones help) or do a stunt. Having visuals such as banners, t-shirts and signs may help make the protest bigger despite the low numbers.

How do we find information about the visiting companies?

What's great is that someone has probably done this already when the arms company came to their university. So first off, check out the CAAT wiki and the companies' pages on the CAAT website to see if there is any information up there already. If those don't give you what you want then start researching on the companies' own websites, other anti-arms trade groups or Corporate Watch and in old news articles. You can also email CAAT's Research Coordinator ian@caat.org.uk or the Universities Network Coordinator universities@caat.org.uk to ask for advice.

Find out as much as you can to know your enemy! Make sure you put whatever research you do on the CAAT wiki (<http://wiki.caat.org.uk>) so others don't have to repeat the work.

The Edinburgh Rebel Clown Army takes over a careers fair



What next?

1. Find out more about your University's Careers Service - check their website, look through their literature and sign up for email alerts about future events. Keep an eye out especially for information aimed at engineering or physics students. Many of the recruitment fairs take place at the beginning of the academic year (in October/November) so make sure you are ready to take action at the start of term.

2. Take action! When you find out about a careers fair or an evening presentation taking place - organise an action to disrupt it and inform students about the arms trade. You can find ideas and materials on the student wiki <http://wiki.caat.org.uk>. Let's save each other time and share resources!

Banner drops are always an effective way to get your message across



Case study: *So it's just you and a multi-billion pound industry?*

As an Engineer I was invited to go to a presentation by BAE Systems. Not only was I annoyed that the recruitment and careers services were doing BAE's marketing for them, but I was familiar with what BAE got up to and so I decided that it was time someone exposed them on campus.

Having booked my place on the presentation I produced a leaflet with the help of CAAT's and other's resources. It contained some of the inescapable truths regarding BAE and the arms trade. Presentation day came and I don't mind admitting I was nervous; it was me versus well-trained, squeaky clean, pin striped PR people. They had come to put their corporate spin on BAE's dealings - they knew what they were doing. I had come to 'un-spin' and didn't know what I was doing. I had hoped that they would allow for a question and answer session so that I could have an audience to my awkward questions, however they had clearly planned for this and questions were to be asked once the presentation had ended and everyone had started on the free drinks.

However despite this set-back I did manage to talk to almost everyone (about 35 students) individually about the issues. The students I spoke to were very receptive and almost everyone took a leaflet as they were leaving. BAE systems may have many words but I had the last.

What next?

Conclusion and empowering motivational bit at the end

The campaign against arms trade recruitment on campus is a crucial one with tangible and attainable objectives. The fact that in 2008 E.ON pulled out of their tour of universities demonstrates how powerful student protests can be. Add this to the fact that Rolls Royce and BAE are struggling to employ recent graduates and you have a weakness in the system. This presents us with an opportunity to increase the pressure for ending the arms trade.

We need to show universities that we shall not be targeted by arms companies and that a recruitment service which is complicit with the arms trade is unacceptable.

Hopefully you will now know how the arms trade recruits graduates, and have some ideas about what to do about it at your university. Have a great time and let us know how you get on (email: universities@caat.org.uk).

Useful Info

- <http://wiki.caat.org.uk/> A mini-site is for students and academics concerned about the arms trade. Email universities@caat.org.uk to become a contributor.
- www.caat.org.uk - Campaign Against Arms Trade's website. Here you can find information on each of the arms companies.
- <http://www.caat.org.uk/campaigns/universities/intro.php> - Does your university invest in the arms trade? Detailed info on most UK universities' investments and how to divest.
- <http://www.studywarnomore.org.uk/> - Does your university work for the military? Probably. Find out and do something about it.
- <http://ei.wikia.com/> - A great site with loads of info about ethical investment.
- <http://weaponsoutofwarwick.wordpress.com/2009/02/15/alternative-careers-guide/> - Weapons out of Warwick's "Alternative Recruitment Guide" (also check out the BAE specific guide).

Students bring out the AK47s at a BAE Systems stall



Appendix 1: Arguing the case

Common arguments that arms company reps will use

“The arms trade is vital for national security”

Regardless of how you feel about the military, the armed forces and arms companies are different things with different interests. Arms companies do not exist to provide Britain with weapons but rather are profit-driven companies and will act in ways to maximise their profits.

Like other large companies, arms manufacturers will move wherever they can gain markets and profits for shareholders – and that is often outside the UK. BAE Systems is a case in point. While its recent advertising campaign plays on its British roots with union flags galore, it employs more workers in the US than the UK. Its biggest markets and factories are in the US, while it is building other ‘home markets’ in Saudi Arabia, India, Sweden, South Africa and Australia. BAE gives priority to British needs only as long as these coincide with profits.

Climate change is widely recognised as the greatest threat to global security, but as it is not a military problem with military solutions it barely registers when the UK Government allocates resources to ‘security’. The costs to UK prosperity of indulging in US-led wars are considerable; the costs of not addressing environmental threats are likely to overshadow these.

“The arms trade is good for the economy”

BAE Systems recently ran a major PR campaign which claimed it was essential for jobs and the economy. This is a myth and it is easy to bust: the key points are that the UK arms trade is heavily subsidised (some say up to £13,000 per job per year) and generates very few jobs compared to a more labour intensive industry like insulating lofts. Although they may constantly be producing things, these products are not socially useful and cause destruction. It would be better to use the resources and government funding to produce socially useful things such as technology used for generating renewable energy.

Disarm York on their way to another careers fair



Arguing the case

“Arms companies only do what the government allows them to”

The Government's arms export laws are notoriously weak and history clearly shows that despite export laws arms companies sell arms to numerous dictators and human rights violating countries. To say that it is only up to the Government to decide who companies can sell to is a total dereliction of moral responsibility and indefensible.

“If we didn't sell arms then somebody else would (probably the French!)”

That is a moral fallacy, if you put it in any other context then it immediately seems absurd. For example imagine a heroin dealer standing up in court and saying that if he didn't sell drugs to school kids in the playground then somebody else would, I doubt any judge would accept that argument.

“Drink driving causes a lot of accidents, but if I worked for Ford I wouldn't get upset every time a car got smashed up.”

This is often the response to a question along the lines of 'Does it not bother you that the weapons your company sells results in the deaths of civilians?' Note that they will avoid answering the question, so make sure they do. Cars are not tools specifically designed to kill people and are designed to maximise safety, and when they do kill people it is not the intention. Weapons on the other hand are designed to kill, maim and destroy and have no other function. It is not the same at all.

Students highlight the problems with companies like BAE Systems



Students countering arms company recruitment



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