

Made in Scotland

The deadly relationship fuelling the
crisis in Yemen

Introduction

In the face of a changing international tide, the UK Government has so far continued to ignore calls to place an embargo on weapons sales and end its support for the Saudi-led coalition in the war in Yemen¹.

Credit: CAAT



The US moved to halt arms sales in January 2021 following the election of Joe Biden, and while the extent of the US embargo is not yet clear as the US were the number one supplier of arms to Saudi², the restrictions will have a massive impact on the coalition's armoury. Several major EU countries have also imposed arms embargoes. Italy³ implemented a ban on sales of arms to both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and the German Government announced its running embargo would be extended until 2022⁴, leaving the UK in the position of an international outlier.

By far, Saudi Arabia is the UK's biggest arms customer, accounting for nearly 40% of all arms sales⁵, and one of the world's most authoritarian regimes. The published value of UK arms licenced for export to the Saudi-led coalition since the bombing began in March 2015 is £6.3bn; however, CAAT estimates that the real value is at least £16 billion⁶.

UK-made warplanes, bombs and missiles have fuelled the conflict in Yemen which has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis⁷, with 24 million people, 80% of Yemen's population, requiring humanitarian assistance as of January 2019⁸. Saudi Arabia and the UAE lead the coalition, alongside Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait and Morocco. Coalition forces have targeted hospitals, clinics and vaccinations centres across Yemen, and after nearly six years of conflict, the country's healthcare infrastructure has "almost collapsed."⁹.

Polls over recent years have found the Scottish public are significantly opposed to Saudi arms exports. Just 11% of Scots said arms sales to Saudi Arabia were acceptable in a 2019 Opinion poll¹⁰. In 2018, a ComRes poll gave similar results, with only 14% of Scots supporting continued arms sales to the Kingdom¹¹.

Despite this public opposition, weapons and military goods made in Scotland, from Dumfries and Galloway, Fife, Midlothian, Glasgow and Lanarkshire, are all in operation with the Saudi-led coalition forces. At least 16 arms companies operating in Scotland have applied for military export licences to Saudi-led coalition members or worked directly with military forces since 2008¹².

In the Scottish Parliament, the Government has faced criticism over grants and support given to arms companies by its business support body Scottish Enterprise. **Scottish Enterprise provides ten of the companies mentioned with free account management services, yet held meetings around diversification from arms sales with only four of them over the past 12 months¹³.**

Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) is a UK-based organisation working to end the international arms trade.

In the coming pages, we take a look at the Scottish based companies selling to members of the Saudi coalition, the situation on the ground, and the UK and Scottish Government's roles in the unfolding humanitarian crisis.



The UK and Scottish Governments

The UK is now the second biggest arms producer in the world. When Westminster are criticised over specific deals, the usual response is that the UK operates “one of the most robust defence export control regimes in the world”.

Saudi Arabia is by far the biggest customer of British-made bombs and warplanes, but in June 2019 the Court of Appeal ruled that UK arms sales to the Kingdom for use in Yemen are unlawful, forcing the Government to stop issuing new arms export licences¹⁴.

However, in July 2020, the Government announced any international humanitarian law violations were only “isolated incidents”, and it would resume arms sales¹⁵. In the three months that followed, **Boris Johnson’s Government approved a staggering £1.39bn worth of arms to Saudi Arabia. £1.36bn of these export licences were for bombs and munitions¹⁶.**

As well as exports, the British-Saudi Defence Cooperation Programme facilitated over 6,000 BAE Systems employees¹⁷ to provide critical services for the Saudi Air Force. This bombing campaigning has been conducted mostly from the skies, so the direct support has been vital to the coalition’s continued bombardment of Yemen.

A former BAE Systems employee, who had recently worked in Saudi Arabia, told Dispatches in 2019 that without UK support, “in 7 to 14 days there wouldn’t be a jet in the sky¹⁸”. Former Saudi Air Force officer Yahya Assiri confirmed in the same programme that the Saudis “can’t keep the Typhoon in the air without the British.”

The insidious relationship between the Saudi government and elected officials in the House of Commons must also be questioned. CAAT Scotland research found that MPs have registered at least £323,659 in donations from the Kingdom since the war began, in the form of all-expenses-paid trips to the Gulf state. In total, at least 90 MPs have been on trips paid by the governments of the coalition in Yemen, totalling £675,000.

In Scotland, four of the five main political parties have committed to opposing UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia; the SNP, Scottish Labour, Scottish Greens and the Scottish Liberal Democrats, translating to 53 of Scotland’s 59 MPs¹⁹.

Despite these statements, companies arming Saudi Arabia have held at least 29 lobbying meetings with members of the Scottish Parliament over the last two years²⁰ with Scottish Government ministers registering at least 23 meetings and visits with them since the start of the war²¹.

As well as providing account management services, **Scottish Enterprise has given at least £8,757,353 in public money to multinational companies fuelling the war in Yemen since 2017**, with Leonardo receiving £7,051,090, BAE £1,600,000 and Raytheon £106,263²².

Since the war began, the public-body has also given at least £433,605 to Helmet Integrated Services and £16,875 to Penman, who have supplied military goods to the Saudis²³. Also, over £1.7m granted to Rolls Royce has since been fully repaid.

In response to criticism over support, the Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise often claim that money granted to arms companies is designed to

support non-arms producing aspects of the businesses. However, that isn't always the case.

Much of Leonardo's funding was earmarked for the Osprey radar project, and Scottish Enterprise heralded its use by the Norwegian Search and Rescue Service²⁴. Since then, the Osprey has been fitted as a critical component on the Icarus Tactical Air Vehicle and displayed for sale at one of the world's largest arms fairs, DSEI. The device provides battlefield management and re-arming functions²⁵ for the low-cost drone/warplane, that can be armed with missiles and weaponry²⁶.

Background Context

PENMAN

The Arab Spring in Yemen forced the resignation of long-time authoritarian president Ali Abdullah Saleh. A power struggle ensued in the following years and in September 2014, the Zaydi-Shia Houthi group from the north of Yemen took the capital city of Sana'a by force. By the next February, Yemen's Sunni president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi fled the city to Riyadh. That March an all-out civil war began.



Shortly afterwards the Saudi-led coalition began airstrikes in support of the Government. In the years that have followed, all sides have been accused of violations of International Humanitarian Law. Indiscriminate artillery bombardment carried out mainly by Houthi-Saleh forces has struck populated neighbourhoods, killing and wounding civilians, while the Saudi-led forces have led indiscriminate aerial bombing campaigns²⁷.

Raytheon

On 9 August 2018 Saudi-led forces fired missiles at a school bus in a busy market place in the town of Dhahyan, killing twenty-six children and injuring nineteen²⁸. That same month, Saudi-led air forces targeted a wedding in Yemen's Bani Qayis district, killing at least twenty people including the bride²⁹. Coalition aerial and naval blockades of Houthi-controlled ports and airports have created a massive scarcity of food, medicine and essential supplies in a country that imports 90% of its food.

BAE SYSTEMS

 **LEONARDO**

According to the UN Report on Children and Armed Conflict, 370 children were recruited by armed forces in Yemen in 2018, including 170 by the Houthis and 111 by Yemeni government forces³⁰. The 2019 UN report also confirmed 1,689 child casualties. A narrow majority of child casualties resulted from ground fighting, followed by airstrikes and unexploded munitions. The coalition was responsible for 43% of child casualties, with 684 of the 729 deaths attributed to airstrikes. The UN found the Houthis responsible for 398 child casualties. UNICEF estimates that every 10 minutes, a child in Yemen dies from preventable diseases, and 2 million are malnourished³¹.

From Scotland with Shame

It is difficult to calculate the exact impact of Scottish weapons in Yemen. Many discovered bomb fragments go unidentified, but experts in the country have managed to identify weaponry involved at the sites of several of the coalition's airstrikes.



Credit: ITV News

Warzan Family Home

In June 2019, a family home in the village of Warzan was the target of the Saudi-led coalition's airstrikes. Despite there not being a legitimate Houthi or military target within at least 1km of the site, a fighter jet struck the al-Kindi home³². Fifteen minutes later the pilot returned to attack the collapsed house again. When family members arrived, they found six people dead inside, including three children, aged twelve, nine and six³³.

The fragments of a bomb remained in the rubble; a Raytheon made GBU-12 Paveway II. The US sold Paveway II bomb relies on guidance

systems produced in the US company's Glenrothes plant³⁴. In November 2015, the US Defence Agency approved the sale of over 7000 Paveway II bombs to the Saudi Government³⁵.

Just because the US sells a Raytheon bomb or system, it doesn't necessarily mean that components or guidance systems are not made in Scotland³⁶. For example, Glenrothes was the only Raytheon facility outside North America to play a part in the US-sold Tomahawk Missile production and is the sixth most involved of the 25-plus factories contributing to the weapon system³⁷.

Mastaba Market

On 15 March 2016, the coalition partner's latest target was the bustling marketplace in the small village of Mastaba. Residents confirmed that Houthi fighters frequented a local restaurant, and ten were thought to have been killed in the attack, but the overall death toll was much more devastating.

Ninety-seven civilians going about their day to day life were killed as the double bombing raid rained down. Twenty-four of those deaths were children. Mastaba residents said that many members of their extended families had died. One lost 16 family members, and the other 17³⁸.

Human Rights Watch investigators authenticated a Raytheon-made Paveway guidance system, thought to be paired with an MK-84 bomb, found by ITV and BBC journalists at the scene. Raytheon's Glenrothes factory is a significant producer of the Paveway system.

Warehouse and Factory Attacks

A string of warehouse bombings in 2016 have been linked directly to Raytheon UK, and the Paveway IV bomb produced in Fife³⁹. Manufacturing of the Paveway IV ‘smart bomb’ is split between Raytheon’s Glenrothes and Harlow factories⁴⁰. Initially produced for the RAF, Raytheon UK managed to secure the right to export the bombs to Saudi Arabia in 2014, after years of the US blocking the sale due to concerns about their use⁴¹.

Paveway IV bomb fragments were found at the scene of multiple bombings on 6 January 2016, including the Al-Muqbeli Warehouse and the nearby Derhim Industrial Factory. Human rights groups in Yemen found no evidence that either site was being used for military purposes or storing military goods. Paveway IV fragments were found again later that year when the coalition dropped four bombs on the Al-Senidar Factory Complex. The blast from the bombs hit three different factories and at least one residential house nearby. An expert UN panel visited the site and did not find evidence of military targets in or near the complex at the time of the attack.

“for people in Saudi Arabia and Yemen it is impossible to separate the people who sell the weapon from the ones that use them.”

Arabian activist Ameen Nemer at the 2019 BAE AGM

22,611 Coalition Airstrikes

According to the Yemen Data Project, there have been 22,611 bombing runs conducted by the Saudi-led coalition, with over 8,750 civilian deaths⁴². Many of the active warplanes can only function with critical systems and targeting equipment made in Scotland.

Saudi Arabia operates 72 Eurofighter Typhoons⁴³. The Typhoon relies on critical radar systems made and designed on Scotland’s East Coast, and infrared target tracking devices made on the West Coast⁴⁴.

Based in Edinburgh, Leonardo⁴⁵ is one of three principal partners in the Eurofighter project, alongside BAE Systems and Airbus, and manufactures 60% of the electronic and radar systems on the warplanes. The Edinburgh factory is leading the design and manufacture of the new Captor-E radar⁴⁶ to fit the next generation of Typhoon warplanes⁴⁷.

Based in Glasgow, Thales Optronics⁴⁸ worked with Leonardo to create the PIRATE infrared target tracking device for the Eurofighters in operation⁴⁹. The radar



finds and locks onto both ground and air targets for missiles and bombs to be fired at, making it critical to offensives and airstrikes.

Rolls Royce is the leading partner in producing the EJ200 engines for the Eurofighter warplanes⁵⁰. The Royal Saudi Air Force also operate Hawk jets, powered by Rolls Royce engines, which are made in the company's Inchinnan plant in Scotland⁵¹. BAE Systems⁵² chair Roger Carr has said that he did not know if the company's products, including the Typhoon, were used to commit a particular war crime in Yemen⁵³ this is despite the UK Government confirming the use of both the Typhoon and Tornado aircraft by the Saudi-led coalition.

Ground Forces

On the ground, the Saudi armed forces rely on armoured vehicles part-made in Dumfries by Penman⁵⁴. The Scottish based company manufactured the Metras MRV off-road military vehicle in close collaboration with Saudi based firm ERAF Industries, along with specifications set by the Saudi Government.

Another weapons systems part-manufactured by Raytheon in Glenrothes currently in operation with the Saudi forces is the TOW missile. In 2018 Saudi Arabia purchased 6600 of the 'anti-tank' rockets, at \$670m⁵⁵.

In 2010, the US Department of Defense approved the sale of 150 Javelin missiles to the Saudi Government⁵⁶. The weapon is also part-made at the Fife factory and is described by Raytheon as a "fire and forget" missile that can be shoulder-mounted and even mounted on crewless vehicles and fired remotely⁵⁷.

Elsewhere, Prestwick anti-drone firm Quantum Aviation⁵⁸ has provided services for the UAE Navy, as has Midlothian firm MacTaggart Scott, who has also exported products to Saudi Arabia⁵⁹.

Ayrshire-based company Chemring Energetics who specialise in explosives and missile components have also applied for military export licences to the UAE⁶⁰. Dundee's Albacom has also applied for export licences to the UAE⁶¹, as has MoD service provider Qinetiq⁶².

Kirriemuir riot gear and military textile firm J&D Wilkie has applied for export licences to Saudi Arabia⁶³, as has Helmet Integrated Systems owner Gentex, who also pursued licences for the UAE and Bahrain⁶⁴.

Irvine's Vector Aircraft Services count the Royal Saudi Air Force amongst its satisfied customers⁶⁵. Lockheed Martin UK has applied for military export licences to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE⁶⁶.



Calls for change

- We are at a crucial juncture in the Yemen conflict. Pressure must be placed on Westminster from across the UK to join international partners and halt arms sales to parties involved in the war, as arming one side of the conflict to the teeth is no way to find a peaceful resolution.

We call on the Scottish Parliament to make an objection to continued arms sales clear.

In the summer of 2020, the Scottish Parliament voted unanimously to halt tear gas exports, rubber bullets and riot gear to the United States⁶⁷. In 2015 it voted overwhelmingly against the renewal of the UK's Trident nuclear weapon programme by 96 to 17, despite not having the powers to affect the decision⁶⁸. The sooner action is taken, the better it will be for the millions of people trapped in desperate situations across Yemen.

- With more countries worldwide halting the flow of arms to Saudi and its coalition partners, it is possible that the immoral bombardment of Yemen will come to an end, and the UK will be left isolated. Unite research at the Rolls Royce plant at Inchinnan in 2020, after hundreds of jobs were cut, found a desire amongst the workers to move into the renewables sector. The union warned that the aerospace and military-centred workforce's skills could be lost forever if the Government does not provide transition support for workers.

The Scottish Government needs to take real action to mitigate the impact on the sector by utilising these workers' specialist skills.

Without intervention from Holyrood to facilitate their transition into socially useful manufacturing and engineering, hundreds of workers could be left behind.

- As well as being fitted on an uncrewed warplane, the Scottish Enterprise funded Osprey radar has also been heralded by Leonardo for its capabilities for clamping down on immigration and refugees crossing borders⁶⁹. Investments of the public purse should reflect the outward-looking and peacebuilding nation Scotland wants to be, not disappearing into the pockets of companies who profit from death and destruction.

We call for a full review of the policies and priorities of Scottish Enterprise and its partner public bodies such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

The Scottish Government should act per the morals it claims to uphold. Holyrood Ministers should not be holding dozens of meetings with arms companies unless they are transparent and focused on defence diversification and protecting the workers' livelihoods.

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