



NEWSLETTER 54

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# Raise facts, not flags

Because Britain has sold a substantial amount of military, and almost exclusively naval, equipment to Argentina, CAAT has been very much in demand by the media, organisations, groups and individuals. Within five days of the invasion of the Falkland Islands CAAT had produced a factsheet on the British military involvement in Argentina, giving full details of sales and background information on training and the missiles and helicopters. A few days later, the National Peace Council produced a most comprehensive historical background with proposals for a solution. Details of availability of both are on page 3.

CAAT's press release accompanying the factsheet led to, amongst others, an interview on Radio 4's "Today" programme to which the Defence Sales Organisation were invited but, significantly, refused to attend.

Never before, it seems, has Britain been involved in a war for which the arms salesmen and advertisers have been more to blame than the politicians and generals. Arms salesmen like wars for two reasons:- the equipment gets test marketed and improvements can be made, and they do nicely out of the ensuing rearmament. They have been preparing for war for years. It is Lord Carrington and his ilk who have been taken by surprise. (For more on the arms sellers see page 2.) So it is no wonder, then that the DSO wants to keep such a low profile

Since the start of the crisis there has been a deafening silence in the British media on at least two issues which need a much higher profile:-

1. The Defence Sales Organisation has excelled in its efforts to arm the world, and make sure that every time someone is blown up, drowned, burned or maimed, its done with quality British equipment and none of your foreign rubbish - and that "our" manufacturers make as much cash out of it as possible. Yet nowhere has there been serious discussion about its clear culpability.

● The Falklands crisis isn't far away but here in electronics companies in the home counties and in offices like the DSO. Make sure

that you point this out when writing to your local press, seeing your MP or whatever else you are doing to resist the Falklands madness.

2. The British Army Equipment Exhibition 82 (BAEE) has likewise largely been overlooked in the glories of the retaking of South Georgia and the ignominies of the sinking of the cruiser *Belgrano*. It has been planned for 21-25 June in Aldershot and as far as we know at this time, there is no intention of cancelling it. But in the present situation this could very well be possible and there are lots of ideas and suggestions for things you can do on page 3.

Several MPs responded quickly to a special CAAT mailing to them on the Falklands and BAEE and asked about cancellation. From the length and tone of the replies we have seen, it seems as though the government is indeed worried about how it will 'look', and realise at last that we do have a point about the inappropriateness of BAEE going ahead in the middle of a UN Special Session on Disarmament AND a war!

● If you do nothing else, please write to the Prime Minister and send a copy to Michael Foot, calling for BAEE to be cancelled. It needs your continued pressure now.

Further analysis of the arms aspects of the crisis appears on page 2, but here is another angle you could work on.

Both parties to the Falklands conflict are armed not only with British but also French weapons. If Venezuela and Chile and Brazil are drawn more directly into the conflict (on whatever side) even more weapons will be used against others from the same manufacturer. CAAT will provide you with the details, but please send a s.a.e. Contacts in other major arms supplier countries have been approached to sign a statement we have written condemning all conventional arms sales.

Write to your Member of the European Parliament ● to ask them to urge that the trade in arms does not carry on as if nothing had happened.

(montage by CAAT)

