

Arms trade “blood money” funds University research



By Hannah Ellis-Petersen, Editor (2010/11)
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Photo credit: Ted Lipsien

The University has come under fire from both student and national campaign groups, after it has been revealed they received over £4 million from arms companies, to fund research since 2008.

In data uncovered by *Nouse*, four major arms companies – BAE Systems, MBDA, Rolls Royce and QinetiQ – were named as substantial research funders across three departments at the University.

BAE systems, the world’s third largest trader in arms and the subject of several corruption investigations globally, provided £1.24 million in research support this year alone.

Speaking to *Nouse*, Abi Haque, a national spokesperson for the ‘Campaign Against Arms Trade’ (CAAT) called the receiving of arms investment, the “accepting of blood money.”

She continued: “To accept large sums of money from arms companies like BAE Systems, the University is associating itself, and therefore also its students, with the grave human rights abuses like those seen recently in the Arab Springs where BAE’s armoured vehicles were sent to suppress peaceful protests in Bahrain.”

The figures show that between 2008 and 2010, BAE Systems has provided the Computer Science department with £2,890,336, and the Electronics Department with £234,691, towards projects such as those titled “Wireless Aircraft.”

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“These arms companies are built, if not entirely, on the profits of destruction, corruption and war”

Alexandra Peck

Campaign Against Arms Trade activist

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Professor John Robinson, Head of the Electronics Department, described it as a projects “to understand the behaviour of wireless systems within vehicular environments so that they might be used more effectively.”

“BAE directly and additionally funded the manufacture of some wireless systems to be tested in a real aircraft, and contributed towards attendance at meetings to discuss the technology.”

Similarly, Rolls Royce, the second largest engine maker for military aircraft and tester of Nuclear reactors for submarines, has given the Computer Science department £571,203.36 for “submarine” research.

This has raised concern from arms protest groups that these University projects are directly related to the arms trade and manufacture of weapons.

BAE systems is Britain's only manufacturer of warplanes and submarines, and is a major producer of tanks, guns, mortars and ammunition. Since 2003, it has faced a series of ongoing allegations of corruption and bribery, and late last year admitted guilt, paying out £300m over a corrupt arms deal. They are known suppliers of arms to Saudi Arabia, as well as the Israel Defence forces.

Arms Company Profiles

BAE Systems

The world's largest arms producer. Their 2010 profits exceeded £22 billion

Products include nuclear submarines, tanks and armoured cars, guns, ammunitions and fighter aircraft

The company has been the subject of several global investigations over allegations of bribery, corruption and unethical practice, particularly in Saudi Arabia

Last year, they were found guilty of fraud and made to pay £268 million in criminal fines

MBDA

MBDA is a world leader in missile and missile system development- works with over 90 armed forces worldwide

Develop air-to-air missiles, such the meteor; surface-to-air missiles, such as Mistral and anti-ship missiles, such as Ex

Clouded in controversy after they signed an £147 million contract for anti-tank missiles, and £112 million communication system contract with Colonel Gaddafi and the Libyan Government in 2007

Rolls Royce

23rd largest defence provider in the world, mainly developing military aircraft engines

Rolls Royce Marine Power Operations tests nuclear reactors for Royal Naval submarines and powers all the UK's nuclear submarines

Makes engines for warplanes, ships and submarines that are sold to 109 countries around the world. A famous example is the Hawk jet

QinetiQ

QinetiQ is defence and security technology company. It develops and tests new weapons and 'future concepts' in defence technology including ballistic missile defence

80 per cent of QinetiQ sales are military and the MoD is its largest customer

Also develops surveillance and security technologies, weapons nanotechnology and 'energetic materials' (i.e. explosives)

Haque spoke on CAAT's own experience of the company: "Having just returned from BAE Systems annual general meeting it is clear from the statements made by the Chairman Dick Olver, that the company is not interested in commenting on arming regimes that have been found to be lacking in human rights. There was also a refusal to apologise or express any remorse for the innocent civilians so often killed by products made by the company or for their appalling record on ethics and corruption."

Alexandra Peck, a member of the York branch of CAAT, voiced similar concerns over York's association with BAE Systems whose international sales "are steeped in scandal."

"These companies are built, if not entirely, on the profits of corruption, destruction and war," she added.

"British arms manufacturers have put weapons in the hands of the Middle-Eastern dictators and arm regimes all over the world known to commit human rights violations. The University of York should consider these factors not

just financial ones when deciding the extent of its associations with these firms.”

However, Professor John McDermid, Head of the Computer Science, defended his department’s influx of arms funding, calling it “ethically justified.”

He said: “The work the Department does for BAE Systems and QinetiQ is largely if not entirely concerned with improving safety, e.g. developing techniques to seek to prevent aircraft accidents such as the loss of the Nimrod. Indeed we are referred to in the Haddon-Cave report on the accident.”

As well as BAE Systems and Rolls Royce, the figures shows considerable funding research from QinetiQ, an international defence technology company, and MBDA, a missile developer that produces both surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles, as well as missile systems.

Since 2008, QinetiQ has provided £237,009 for research, while MBDA has given £22,238.

MBDA was recently embroiled in scandal, after it was revealed they sold £147 million worth of anti-tank missiles, and a £112 million related communications system contract to Colonel Gaddafi and the Libyan government in 2007. They are also the main deployer of weapons to Afghanistan.

However, both John Robinson and Richard Taylor, Heads of the Electronics and Chemistry, respectively, stressed their departments had a “rigorous” ethics procedure in line with the University ethics procedures, and that each has a member of staff on the Physical Sciences Ethics Committee, to fully evaluate the ethical implications of each funding source.

Chris Venables, another CAAT activist at York, spoke to *Nouse* on the complexity of the issue: “Companies involved in the arms trade have for a long time invested substantially in Higher Education. Whilst understanding the need for private sector involvement in STEM subjects, we should not accept funding blindly, pushing aside morality for our own personal gain.”

Accusing the arms trade of being “the most corrupt and damaging industries that operates in the world today”, he called on the University to “recognise the link” created by accepting such funding.



Venables continued “Over the last 20 years there have been countless examples of defence companies selling weapons to countries that have appalling human rights records as well as numerous instances of bribery and corruption. These are the same companies who today invest millions of pounds at the University of York.”

Tim Ngwena, YUSU President, spoke of his “lack of surprise” over the findings.

He said: “the issue here is the ethical conflict they cause. You have to be careful with research funding and the tracks you leave. Nearly all research funding may come from countries or companies with either no ethical policy or share in a stake of a company that transports arms to a country or regime.”

This information follows on from a previous controversy over the University’s own investment in the arms trade, which led to the passing of a University ethical investment policy in 2009.

It states that “the University will not knowingly invest in companies whose activities include practices which directly pose a risk of serious harm to individuals or groups, or whose activities are inconsistent with the mission and values of the University.”

Arms trade and University of York: A retrospective

The University's relationship to the arms trade has always been a somewhat murky business. Since *Nouse* revealed that York held almost 150,000 shares in arms company BAE Systems, the ethical implications of such a monetary involvement has been a point of controversy between student campaigners and the University administration. In 2008 York was listed as the sixth largest University investor in the arms trade, with shares in both BAE systems and Rolls totalling over £1 million.

After mass student protest, an ethical investment policy was finally passed in 2009. Nonetheless, this policy has not prevented the same arms companies considered “unethical”, investing in York research themselves, meaning that University involvement in arms trade is as solid as ever. With the University Super Annuation Scheme also reliant on investment, it seems the campaign against York's dependence on arms and defence companies is far from over.

However, this policy does not apply to companies themselves investing in the University, or University research. The ethical guidelines and code of practice for research funding is based solely around the criteria of potential disrepute for the department, and University, and whether the research results will be used by the funder to “enhance unethical practices”.

Student groups say that these are not sufficient to prevent unethical funding, and allow too much “room for manoeuvre.”

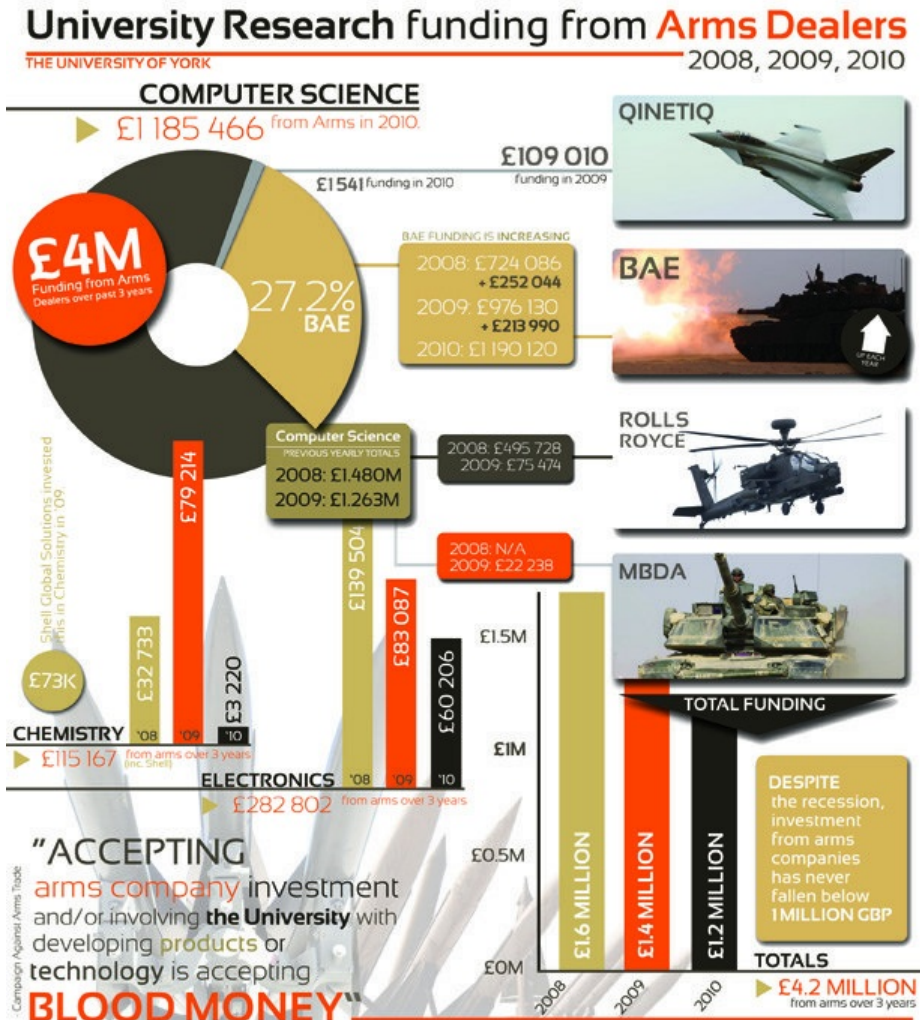
The ethical funding issue has also raised further questions over the implications of accepting research finance from oil and energy companies, such as Shell Global solutions; a key source of York research finance. Shell have faced ongoing criticism for their mass leaking of oil, which has led to the destruction of natural habitat and local livelihoods in the Niger Delta. The company is currently the subject of a million dollar lawsuit due to these “devastating” oil leaks for which they are being held culpable.

However, despite these ongoing ethical allegations, the data uncovered by *Nouse* showed that Shell Global Solutions have given £107,601 in research funding for the Chemistry department alone, since 2008.

York Students Against Cuts have spoken out against findings, and their fears over the adverse affect education cuts will have on financial support from the arms trade.

“We fear that cuts to higher education funding will lead to greater dependence on private funding from corporations and an increased emphasis on meeting business needs over the development of knowledge and learning” said a York student spokesperson.

“Arms manufacturers and corporations should not be afforded the power to set the parameters of our education.”



Graphic: Jonathan Frost



31 comments

Dick Taylor

10 May '11 at 4:08 pm

Are you aware that Rolls Royce paid millions of Dollars a year in secret corruption and slush funds to help sell their aero engines to airlines that will be “advised” (or forced!) by those receiving the secret slush funds. Just one example is that Tommy Suharto (son of the ex-Indonesian president) was given about 20 million dollars and a new blue Rolls Royce car by Rolls Royce (before he was jailed for murder!) to force the Indonesian airline Garuda to take the R-R Trent 700 engine on the A330 aircraft they were buying. They got a really bad commercial deal and the follow-on warranty and support was probably the worst any operator had ever had. When Tommy was jailed, Rolls then paid his millionaire friend, Soetikno about 1 million dollars a year! This was supported by the Rolls exec in Indonesia (Dr Mike Gray) because Mike was given “personal benefit” by Soetikno to keep the contract going. Mike even used RR staff to support the bar girl he was “knocking off” when his wife was away.

Dick Taylor. (ex Rolls-Royce Chief Service Rep)

Report

King of Nom

10 May '11 at 10:16 pm

Yes, how dare the engineering sector invest in its possible future employees. :/

[Report](#)

Freedom for Libya

10 May '11 at 10:17 pm

If you want to complain about weapon sales to Libya, blame Blair and Labour for allowing it.

[Report](#)

Vitalis Rugie

11 May '11 at 6:39 am

The collaboration between the higher education and the market should not be condemned wholesomely ,whether good or bad, innovations at the HE must be encouraged and remedial measures of controlling the outcome put in place as well .

The knowledge sharing is important , then it will be possible to trace means and ways of countering the misuse of the technology developed .If you do not want the private sector to fund these projects , then we are not doing any justice to our innovative minds within the higher education considering the funding uts from the governments .

Open innovation and open knowledge sharing between HE and the market must be encouraged , its better to have the IP within a controlled system within HE than have them somewhere within some rogue governments .

[Report](#)

God damn hippies

11 May '11 at 11:40 am

These companies fund excellent research (e.g. computer science department ranked amongst the top in the country). They hire our students (something much needed, as we are ranked 35th nationally for graduate prospects). And yet, students have a go at them, well, because students always need to have a go at something.

Besides, RR doesn't actually make weapons anyway - just engines. Finally, you blame these companies for dealing weapons to Libya and other similar countries. However, keep in mind that before recent events, Gaddafi's regime was recognised by the UK, and indeed all other countries in the world, as a legitimate government.

How would it seem if a UK company declined to have dealings with them? Can you imagine the diplomatic episode such a move would cause? You are asking a company to refuse to do business with a legitimate state. Grow up, please.

[Report](#)

David

12 May '11 at 7:33 am

@ God damn hippies (very mature and thoughtful name btw).

You ask “Can you imagine the diplomatic episode such a move would cause?”

None whatsoever. Do you imagine that such things don't happen already, that UK-based Palestinian companies might choose not to do business with the state of Israel, or vice versa. Companies can choose, or refuse, to do business with whoever they want, they don't have to give a reason, and if they did say that it were over human rights concerns, they would certainly not be thought less of. There are companies that refused, and still refuse, to do business with Mugabe's Zimbabwe, for example, and that did not wait for any declaration of illegitimacy by any nation before making this decision.

I agree that part of the fault for immoral deals with Libya, Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe, Indonesia etc. must lie with the governments of the time who permitted, and sometimes even encouraged these associations; but companies such as BAE could still choose who they did business with, and how, and so are hardly absolved.

[Report](#)

God damn hippies

12 May '11 at 11:13 am

It's a quote from South Park you humorless hippy. Now, if you think York should not accept funding from BAE, I assume you also believe it should not accept funding from the UK government either, right? Given that this government legitimises many oppressive regimes and everything...

Which probably means that York will have to depend

- a) on funding from perfectly harmless companies. Truth to tell, you can find an issue with any single company in the world - be it palm oil dependance, pollution, corruption etc, so I take it you reject this option.
- b) on higher tuition fees. I suspect though that as a genuine hippy you are opposed to these too.

So where does this leave us, eh?

 Report

Oliver Blackburn

12 May '11 at 12:14 pm

Kudos to Jonathan Frost for the Graphic, it's fantastic!

 Report

Dominic Law

12 May '11 at 1:23 pm

All of these companies operate through DESO. The Defence Export Service Organisation which is a UK government department. They decide who these companies can sell to, what they can sell and how much. So your problems should be with DESO and in turn the current and previous governments.

So if you have problem with who weapons etc are sold to protest against DESO since the companies will not sell weapons to any regime without their approval; as long as it forthcoming they will continue to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia etc since the livelihood of their businesses depend on it.

Read http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defence_Export_Services_Organisation for information concerning the fact that heads of DESO are often ex BAE systems etc CEOs. These heads are chosen as I have mentioned by government.

NOUSE if you want a reaction quote speak to Tony Edwards if you can get hold of him. I've met him at my old school and he will speak to you openly about why the companies mentioned need and are allowed to sell weapons abroad.

 Report

they cant just say NO

12 May '11 at 1:28 pm

AND NO BAE systems cant choose who to do business with that easily.

They are listed and owned by shareholders. The shareholders wont let the directors at BAE turn the company into mushy peas because Libya etc are morally abrupt.

If you want to get serious go after the shareholders, JP Morgan etc etc all these other companies that sponsor our university and provide many employment oportunities.

In case its not clear - BAE would be laughed at (and there share price would plummet) if they told the The City they will no longer do business with morally questionable countries.

 Report

Dom Law

12 May '11 at 1:46 pm

All of these companies operate through DESO. The Defence Export Service Organisation which is UK government department. They decide who these companies can sell to, what they can sell and how much. So your problems should be with DESO and in turn the current and previous governments.

So if you have problem with who weapons etc are sold to protest against DESO since the companies will not sell weapons to any regime without their approval; as long as it forthcoming they will continue to sell weapons to Saudi Arabia etc since the livelihood of their businesses depend on it.

Read http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defence_Export_Services_Organisation for information concerning the fact that heads of DESO are often ex BAE systems etc CEOs. These heads are chosen as I have mentioned by government.

If you want a reaction quote from an EX-DESCO chairman speak to Tony Edwards if you can get hold of him. I've met him at my old school and he will speak to you openly about why the companies mentioned need and are allowed to sell weapons abroad.

 Report

Jonathan Frost

12 May '11 at 3:40 pm

@Oliver Blackburn

Cheers, picking up the real issues put forward in this article. Thanks!

 Report

David

12 May '11 at 8:55 pm

“It’s a quote from South Park”. Oh, I see, that certainly is ingenious and witty of you to parrot such a phrase in this context. I really must be humorless; my apologies.

“as a genuine hippy” This is based on what, exactly? Because I disagree with you on this issue? As a matter of fact, I wouldn’t want tuition fees to be higher but it’s an obviously false dichotomy to pretend that your a), b) and the status quo are the only options. Otherwise it would be impossible that anyone from our parents’ generation had gone to university without either paying substantial tuition fees or going to unethically funded institutions. And the suggested idea of a graduate tax, whether good or bad, is not meaningless or unintelligible. So even if the sweeping generalization that an ethical problem could be found with any company were to be correct, there would still be alternatives.

In fact though, this generalization is not only unlikely and lazy, it’s also irrelevant, unless I am insisting that we only accept funding from companies that are morally perfect. In fact, I have neither said nor implied anything of the sort, and currently wish only to suggest that we should seek to avoid funding from companies that amorally (and in the case of BAE, sometimes illegally) are inherently linked to the production and distribution of weapons, particularly to oppressive regimes. This is patently a much weaker requirement than the one you attack.

1 “AND NO BAE systems cant choose who to do business with that easily.”2 “In case its not clear – BAE would be laughed at (and there share price would plummet) if they told the The City they will no longer do business with morally questionable countries.”

In case it’s not clear, premise 2 (the thrust of your argument) here, does not actually imply premise 1 (your apparent conclusion). The argument “I do not have free choice of options if my alternative option would lead to me being laughed at, and would be otherwise disadvantageous for myself and any stakeholders” is invalid as well as morally pathetic.

To take an extreme example, surely nobody would dispute that a company ought to avoid, or cease, supplying a regime that was openly using its products to detain, torture and murder its citizens in concentration camps, even if that definitely would lead to the company suffering financially. Few real scenarios would be as clear-cut as this but if that is the only complaint that can be made of this thought-example then the only question is over which regimes come close enough to this level of atrociousness, not over what moral requirements thereby follow.

And incidentally, if I were to offer business, rather than ethical or philosophical, advice to BAE, it would not be to make vague statements about not dealing with morally questionable regimes, but to state specific, sensible moral parameters to their operations. In many cases these would cohere with government statements and policies, and where they did not, BAE could claim to be pro-actively moving ahead, consistently with the “commitment to corporate responsibility” that they already profess publicly

[Report](#)

A

13 May '11 at 12:21 pm

Acutally Dominic arms sales are now promoted through UKTI:DSO, anti-arms campaigners played a part in shutting that down – just like they are having a huge impact on ECGD and the way it operates (the department that underwrites risky arms deals to countries like Indonesia with tax-payers money whilst still making sure that the arms company gets full payment).

Also companies like BAE do have a lot of autonomy in pushing sales and work very closely with the government and UKTI:DSO to push into new markets so to blame the government for arms sales is only a partial truth. BAE Systems were caught out holding talks with Libya when the arms embargo was still in place – BAE choses their markets – there is no doubt. I went to the BAE AGM last week and even their Chairman Dick Olver wouldn't dispute this. On top of all this BAE Systems were actively involved in corruption and have been subject to many an investigation and were fined \$400 million in the US last year for attempting to defraud the US government and £30 million in the UK on accounting 'mistakes' i.e. setting up shell companies to push through bribes to get the deal.

Not a nice company – there are much better ones to develop technologies for (which don't operate in a saturated industry – i.e. alternative energy) / invite onto campus to recruit/ or invest public money in.

[Report](#)

God damn hippies

13 May '11 at 12:42 pm

You have kind of killed the joke. I mean, this isn't Oscar Wilde, but something meant to make people who do not take themselves way too seriously crack a smile. I suppose it fails to work in the case of the so-called college hippies, whose inflated sense of self-worth prevents them from being teased even at the slightest.

Now you are saying we should not accept funding only from one sort of unethical company (arbitrarily chosen), and accept money from companies that exploit children, destroy forests, pay bribes... Very rational indeed!

In the end, universities need to be funded somehow. Higher fees are nearly the same as graduate tax. So you do only have these options: either students pay more themselves, or accept funding from companies. So which one will it be mate?

I for one I am tired of all you silly hippies staging protests and passing motions just because you have nothing better to do with your time.

Oh, and do stop taking yourselves seriously. I'm serious you guys.

[Report](#)

Dave Smedley

13 May '11 at 1:09 pm

This article shows everything that is wrong with nouse. Ill informed and self righteous. As the son of a Rolls Royce employee I should point out that the vast majority of their output is for civil use. Aviation wise with Boeing and marine wise most of their production is for the Japanese fishing fleet. They are really are not a company with blood on there hands.'

Put a proper story on the front page, instead of this joke

[Report](#)

God damn hippies

13 May '11 at 2:20 pm

Oh yeah, Dave is right, I forgot to mention that... how on earth is Rolls an arms company? When I hear Rolls Royce I think of cars, and so do most other non-hippies I know. If RR is immoral for making the engines, then are suppliers of all other parts immoral too?

[Report](#)

What kind of RR research?

13 May '11 at 2:47 pm

BAE and MBDA are arms companies; there is no doubt, but Rolls-Royce do a lot of civil work. Indeed, all you've said about Rolls is that the CS department did “submarine” research. Granted, most submarines are military and I believe that the work that York is involved in is military, but it's concerning marine safety systems. Prof. McDermid should know, it's his research group (<http://www.cs.york.ac.uk/hise/>) and department. Yet you put a picture of a military helicopter in the graphic. Yes, that's what Rolls do but not what York do with Rolls and that's what this article is about. It's misleading and without explanation.

Prof McDermid also said that the CS Department's work with the other arms companies is about safety. York researchers are helping ensure that the lives of young men and women, who do the bidding of the politicians, are not going to come back in a box because of technical failures. I'm proud of that.

[Report](#)

A

13 May '11 at 3:41 pm

A stat on Rolls-Royce so it is easier to assess it's level of involvement in the arms trade is that 25% of the worlds MILITARY aircraft have a RR engine. I used to manage an account for RR and they are considered under many ethical investment policies to be an arms company because of their significant involvement in military jet engines. An example of their military engines would be those used in Hawk Jets (a BAE Systems product) – which have been used in massive human rights violations across the world.

With BAE Systems there is no doubt that they are an arms company, 95.2% of their output is in the military sector – when they sold airbus a majority of their civil work ended. MBDA makes missiles so applications are only military – also many people do not realise that BAE Systems owns 37.5% of MBDA.

York's involvement with the arms trade is not purely on safety technology – it has also been participating on a program developing UAV technology such as the BAE Demon drone (which is an attack/predatory technology) amongst many other projects.

<http://dronewarsuk.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/baes-demon-drone-flies-with-help-of-ten-british-universities/>

[Report](#)

David

13 May '11 at 10:47 pm

“so-called college hippies”- called by you, and only you! Nobody else has introduced the word hippy here, so for you to say “so-called”, presumably in response to your own comments, is pretty laughable. But then I have no sense of humour, so how would I know?

Now you are saying we should not accept funding only from one sort of unethical company (arbitrarily chosen), and accept money from companies that exploit children, destroy forests, pay bribes...

Um...no I'm not. Can you read? But since that wasn't what was being discussed, I've only mentioned arms companies. Happily, there are companies that neither produce arms, nor exploit children etc. There is a difference between saying that we might accept funding from companies that are not morally perfect and saying that we can accept funding from just about any company that does not produce weapons. Hence the usefulness of clearly-defined investment policy. And it's not really acceptable to assume that my opinion on arms companies is arbitrary because it happens not to cohere with yours. I'm sure you have opinions on what is ethical and what is not, whether I agreed with them or not, I wouldn't just suppose that they were arbitrary.

“Higher fees are nearly the same as graduate tax.”

Here though, you do state an opinion as though it were a fact. I don't think they are. In any case, you continue to over-simplify and ignore, for example, what I suggested about our parents generation, other opportunities for public funding through taxation, the possibility that targets for so many people to be in higher education are not helpful, etc.

“I for one I am tired of all you silly hippies staging protests and passing motions just because you have nothing

better to do with your time.”

I have not staged any protests and do not consider myself a hippy (but also do not consider it an insult, many hippies in the US showed considerable courage and integrity and achieved far more than you seem to realise). You are talking to nobody at all, and clearly think that insults are an acceptable substitute for arguments. I also have better things to do with my time than waste any more of it talking to you. I'll leave you alone here, something you may have to get used to you if you do not learn to debate points rather than leaning towards childish ad hominem through repeating the word 'hippy' as though this were some devastating critique.

[Report](#)

J

14 May '11 at 11:21 am

Er, @David: self-righteous much?

And the use of the word 'hippy' is fine here as far as I'm concerned. It adds a little bit of humour, and keeps some people (who insist that everyone should conform to their idea of nirvana) in their place.

@A I think it's tenuous for you to say in a blanket fashion that Rolls Royce is an arms company. The fact that 25% of the world's military aircraft use RR engines just shows they make good engines! But it's not as if the aircraft are dropping their engines to kill people!! Are all the companies who supply food to the Armed Forces arms companies, even if, say, they are someone like Heinz? Or businesses that make military uniforms, are they arms companies. After all, these companies would contribute in the same way RR does to the military ie. allowing them to carry out their military roll, but they're not directly killing people.

[Report](#)

J

14 May '11 at 1:59 pm

I can't help but feel this is drifting towards an anti-military campaign.... There seems to be a slowly developing attitude that York should not be involved in research with companies who play a significant role in developing the technology that protects our servicemen and women safe day in and day out. There is not a single arms company that does not deal outside of the UK and the UK government does not have sufficient funding to source the necessary research. Therefore, whilst we might hate to admit it, these overseas arms deals are very important in sustaining the research that is benefiting our own armed forces.

On that note, a number of students at York are funded through their degrees by the armed forces. Many more are reservists in the UAS, URNU and OTC where they receive world class training and development opportunities that will help them in any walk of life, military or civilian. Supposing we break links with the arms companies will we then jump on the (in my opinion ludicrous) 'kick 'em off campus' bandwagon and deny our students these opportunities?

[Report](#)

God damn hippies!

14 May '11 at 3:17 pm

Again, it's a line from South Park... seriously, you should start watching it, you might reconsider your world view.

Name one company, any company you want... odds are, someone in this university will consider some aspect of this company's business unethical.

On our parents generation: universities were mostly funded by the government. A government that legitimises oppressive regimes, such as Gaddafi's. Why is accepting money from them more ethical?

Anyways, I will leave the debate at that. Anyone with half a brain should be able to see how you take yourself way too seriously, so there's no reason for me to keep pointing out.

Enjoy Roses!

[Report](#)

Sara Osborne

14 May '11 at 5:13 pm

If you are concerned about the university being funded by arms companies you may want to sign this petition:

<http://www.petitiononline.co.uk/petition/petition-against-the-receipt-of-research-funding-from-arms-companies-at-the-university-of-york/2830>

The aim is to encourage the university to be more sensitive to ethical concerns when choosing where to get funding from.

[Report](#)

Matt Sharp

14 May '11 at 6:33 pm

BAE Systems have reportedly sold their weapons to the governments of Uganda, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia (and probably many other countries), all of which have highly questionable human rights records. And there is of course the fraud, as mentioned in the above report.

It is perfectly coherent to oppose this particular company's presence on campus, and any others with similar records, regardless of whether developing military technology on campus should be opposed per se.

In response to 'God damn hippies' point about government funding: one difference is that we can vote them out if we tell them NOT to legitimise oppressive regimes but they decide to continue to do so.

[Report](#)

J

14 May '11 at 7:36 pm

Just so that it is noted, I am the 'J' who commented at 11.21am May 14th, and I am not the same 'J' as the person who commented after me at 1.59pm May 14th, but I whole heartedly agree with the other 'J' and the comments they have made!

Unfortunately we live in a world where we require a military force, and out of all the military organisations in the world, the UK are probably one of the best and most responsible, and contribute to the wider UK economy. I'm not saying they're perfect, but I am saying we should be proud of them and what they do, and not attack and blame them for what POLITICIANS decide.

[Report](#)

Dom

14 May '11 at 9:32 pm

@A

The issues of corruption and bribery are different issues.

I am not disputing that BAE have autonomy in pushing through their deals. My point is that the UK government has for decades supported, encouraged and thus I would infer legitimised British arms manufactures selling their products abroad to some questionable outfits. Of course the arms dealers carry the brunt of responsibility for what they do. But why should BAE question their morals when they have the blessing of their minister?

'BAE not a nice company.' I don't agree with this. Their market is not very nice. But their employees and commitment to equal opportunities might be fantastic ...do you know differently?

@David

Why are you trying to apply the principals of critical thinking to BAE's shareholders and BAE's directors? They don't.

I would actually argue ceasing trade with the number of regimes I assume you are referring to would be fatal not disadvantageous to BAE. Of course I know BAE can decide to stop selling weapons to all morally questionable countries but expecting them to do that without serious pressure from politicians is wholly unrealistic.

.....

RE Rolls Royce. I think they do a lot more good for this world than bad . Is there really a groundswell of opposition to this?

[Report](#)

David

16 May '11 at 8:55 am

I'm sorry if I came across as self-righteous, but I think this criticism could be levelled far more widely. It's difficult to avoid this in this sort of forum without prefacing every sentence with "in my humble, and probably erroneous, opinion". Which would get a little tedious. As for calling me a hippy, I honestly don't mind. But it's incorrect; you might as well call me a hungarian, a scientologist, a lesbian or a thespian for all the accuracy and value it adds. And be aware that the converse stereotype to the peacenik hippy is the ignorant, redneck gun-nut, dementedly screaming "hippies" and ""commies" at anyone who cares to disagree with him. Is this a fair description?

@ GDH. i did enjoy Roses, I hope you did too.

Of course I've seen South Park, I even like the show, but I don't feel the need to base my world view on it. And I really don't take myself seriously at all. Again this is an issue of tone, I'm not going to write LOL or ROFL after everything I find amusing, so please just take my word for it.

As for comments on the issue: "Name one company, any company you want... odds are, someone in this university will consider some aspect of this company's business unethical." Probably true, but it's better to do something than nothing, and I would hope that as adults, some sort of consensus could be reached as to what the most important prohibitions should be. I doubt there is anyone who would consider Traidcraft or the Co-operative group to be less ethical than BAE or Haliburton, for example, and if there is, I would be curious to know more about their ethical standards. I'm aware that these companies are different sizes so it's hardly like-for-like but this is just an example to show that ethical differentiation is not made impossible by the fact that no company is perfect. You speak as though an ethical investment policy were an impossible pipe-dream, but of course many exist. The Church of England, for example, has a sizable and successful one which precludes, among other things, onvestment in companies involved in military products. Members must have reached some agreement on what was most important to avoid.

As for the government; the difference is that their funding for universities was/is provided on an essentially charitable basis, they do not expect any kind of return beyond the education of more graduates. Companies like BAE would not provide funding if they did not get something out of it. They fund research, intended to benefit them as a company and to support their products. If you are not opposed to this military production, then fair enough, there is no significant difference, but otherwise there is. Attending a university with government funding would not support the legitimisation of oppressive governments, even if this were the only thing our government stood for, any more than being treated in a government-funded hospital. Accepting BAE money for BAE research clearly does support them as a company and what they stand for.

[Report](#)

manmademorals

17 May '11 at 4:26 pm

Like it or not, the vast majority of scientific and technological advancements are driven directly or indirectly by war. I don't see why York shouldn't accept funding from these companies when other Universities certainly are. If you do care so deeply about the ethics and morals, maybe you should stop using the internet, which was initially DARPA-funded and is used every single day in war and the killing of innocent people. Military funded technologies are already in use worldwide, will you oppose them as well?

[Report](#)

d1f_91

17 May '11 at 4:43 pm

- 1) Production of actual weapons is not clearly unethical
- 2) Production of equipment used to support those wielding actual weapons is even less clearly unethical
- 3) Being employed by a company, receiving funding from a company, actually funding a company, that participates in 1) or 2) is therefore not clearly unethical.

Whereas: supplying arms to a country that will use them against unprotected civilians, supplying arms to militarily oppressive regimes, terrorist organisations etc. do have strong arguments supporting the title “unethical”.

All of the statistics that demonstrate the involvement of these companies with the military are obviously misleading: let’s see statistics that link them with clearly unethical conflicts. Even with this shown: let’s see statistics that link the research done by this university with the products used in those unethical conflicts.

Even with all of this shown; let’s weigh the damage done to university funding against the potential effect of us refusing them giving us that funding. Would it not be entirely more effective and pointed to direct the campaign against the actual use of the technology researched here? We have leverage for an actual campaign here: they have their reputation and a source of potential employees at stake; why not lobby them in the zone of interest that is actually relevant to us? Push a motion through to force the university to vet the purpose of research.

For those who argue that it is impossible to source funds from ethically pure companies: is it not a moral duty to at least push those companies that we do deal with towards correct ethical practice? We can indeed refuse their funds, we inherit these companies in a few years time: it is not deluded to wield the influence that British universities possess. This is a valid threat. But to simply refuse money does not have the same effect. Where is the NUS?

[Report](#)

electronics student

19 May '11 at 7:58 pm

has anyone actually mentioned the research thats being done?

you all moan at BAE systems and them being immoral etc but have you actually considered what research is being done?

fyi, the research is replacing the wiring to non flight critical sensors with wireless links. Take any big plane as a example (il mention A380, you know the big thing that you will soon be flying on holidays on, not military) its got nearly 5 tonnes of copper wire on it. The research is being done to replace it with wireless links to save on weight, thus reducing fuel consumption and carbon emmisions. I for one, be it BAE is actually happy this is being done by someone

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