

Stop Making a Killing on War!

Cancel CANSEC 2009, Canada's top arms bazaar

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Global Research, December 18, 2008

Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade (COAT)
18 December 2008

Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

The City of Ottawa has now agreed to host the international CANSEC weapons show at the municipality's prime publically-funded facility, Lansdowne Park, between May 27 and 28, 2009.

Among the more than 200 military firms flogging their wares inside the Ottawa Congress Centre at CANSEC 2008, were some of the world's biggest and most profitable war industries: BAE Systems, Boeing, Honeywell, L-3, Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman.

These six firms are prime contractors for many of the deadliest weapons systems ever made, including dozens of different bombers, fighter jets, bombs and missiles. Remarkably, these six corporate giants sold about US\$100 billion worth of military equipment to the Pentagon in 2007, and their combined revenue from global military sales was \$130 billion in 2006. (See details in table, "Top Six Global War Industries at CANSEC 2008.")

The profits made by these leading war industries have come at a disastrous price. The horrendous wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere — where their deadly products are used daily — have taken an inestimable toll on the lives and livelihoods of millions of innocent people, and their ecosystems.

Also exhibiting their wares at CANSEC 2008 were many of Canada's foremost arms industries including CAE, CMC Electronics, General Dynamics Canada, Magellan Aerospace, Pratt & Whitney Canada and SNC-Lavalin. These companies — which consistently rank within Canada's top ten military contractors — are largely reliant on exports to the US.

But CANSEC does much more than just facilitate the growth of top war industries. Hundreds of smaller players in the bustling world of weaponry are also eager to join the action. The 500 booth spaces at CANSEC 2009 will be bristling not only with displays showcasing war technologies but also an array of products used by police and paramilitary "security" forces to "maintain order" around the world.

We stopped them before! We can do it again!

In 1989, during a campaign against an arms show called ARMX, the City of Ottawa banned all such exhibitions from municipal property. However, in 2008 — for the first time in almost 20 years — City Staff leased Lansdowne Park to a military trade show called "Secure Canada."

Due to a legal technicality, City Staff claims that Council's historic 1989 ban no longer applies to Lansdowne Park saying there is "no true impediment to hosting these types of events, while recognizing the degree of sensitivity regarding activities that focus primarily on armaments and various weapons."

"Secure Canada 2008" was eventually cancelled due to federal restrictions on government participation in controversial events during the election. Its organizers also blamed heightened security costs caused by potential protests.

CANSEC is probably the most blatant manifestation of the rapacious, corporate system of global economic exploitation and destruction that will reveal its presence within our local community this year.

As a potent symbol of the international arms trade, CANSEC graphically represents some of the persistent underlying issues faced by peace, human rights and environment activists. As such, CANSEC presents an opportunity to raise awareness about many complex, inter-related issues.

As a starter, please sign COAT's online petition urging City Council to respect Ottawa's ban on hosting arms exhibitions.

Please join our efforts and encourage other individuals and groups to do likewise!

Richard Sanders, is coordinator of the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade, and editor of its magazine, Press for Conversion! COAT was initiated 20 years ago to organize opposition to ARMX '89, which was the last arms show held at a City of Ottawa facility. To learn more, and to get involved, see COAT's website: <http://coat.ncf.ca>

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