

'War Is Good for Business,' Declares Executive at London's Global Arms Fair

"Deals done at DSEI will cause misery across the world, causing global instability, and devastate people's lives," one peace activist lamented.

By [Brett Wilkins](#)

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Military-industrial complex players big and small gathered in London this week, [hawking everything](#) from long-range missiles to gold-plated pistols to arms fair attendees—including representatives of horrific human rights violators—as weapon-makers and other merchants of the machinery of death reap record profits.

"War is good for business," one defense executive attending the biennial Defense and Security Equipment International (DSEI) conference at ExCel London [flat-out told Reuters](#). "We are extremely busy," Michael Elmore, head of sales at the U.K.-based armored steelmaker MTL Advanced, told the media agency.

Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and the West's scramble to arm Ukrainian homeland defenders have been a [bonanza](#) for arms-makers.

"Ukraine is a very interesting combination of First and Second World War technologies and very modern technology," Kuldar Vaarsi, CEO of the Estonian unmanned ground vehicle firm MILREM, told *Reuters*.

Shiny missiles for the shiny promise of world peace. [#DSEI23 pic.twitter.com/czUXg3A19o](#)

— Dr Iain Overton (@iainoverton) [September 12, 2023](#)

Saber-rattling and fearmongering by government, media, and business figures amid rising tensions between the U.S. and its allies on one side, and a fast-rising China on the other,

have also spurred military spending, including Japan's [\\$320 billion buildup](#) announced last December.

"We think this is a longer-term essentially 'sea change' in national defense strategy for the U.S. and for our Western allies," Jim Taiclet, CEO of U.S. arms giant Lockheed Martin, [told investors](#) during a call earlier this summer announcing higher-than-expected sales and profit outlooks.

[According to](#) the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the United States, Russia, France, China, and Germany were the world's top arms exporters from 2018-22, with the five nations accounting for 76% of all weapons exports during that period. The U.S. accounted for nearly 40% of such exports during those five years, while increasing its dominance in the arms trade. The U.S. also remains by far the world's [biggest](#) military spender.

At previous fairs, companies have been found to be promoting illegal weapons like cluster bombs, leg irons and electric shock weapons.

Weapons on display at [#DSEI](#) will be used across the world to silence communities speaking up for human rights △

— Amnesty UK (@AmnestyUK) [September 12, 2023](#)

In addition to major corporations, middlemen like Marc Morales have also been [profiting handsomely](#) from wars in countries including Ukraine. Morales happened to have a warehouse full of ammunition in Bulgaria that the Pentagon originally intended for Afghanistan when Russia invaded its neighbor, and he has been richly rewarded as the U.S. [spends](#) tens of billions of dollars arming Ukrainian forces. He named his new \$10 million yacht *Trigger Happy*.

Outside the sprawling ExCel convention center in London's Docklands, anti-war protesters rallied against the global arms trade and the death and destruction it fuels. *The Guardian* [reported](#) that at least a dozen demonstrators were arrested during the course of the conference, including nine on Thursday for blocking a road outside the venue.

Protesters are taking their message to the streets and blocking roads around the ExCeL centre. Say no to killing. Say no to the arms fair. [#StopDSEI #DSEI23 pic.twitter.com/AwJlDfMXCE](#)

— CAAT (@CAATuk) [September 12, 2023](#)

Sam Perlo-Freeman, a researcher at the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT), told *The Guardian* that "a lot of countries that are being talked about as new arms export markets are ones we would be concerned about."

"Egypt is a repressive regime and Vietnam an absolute dictatorship," Perlo-Freeman added. "Indonesia is involved in brutality in West Papua."

Emily Apple, also of CAAT, [told](#) *People's World* that “the companies exhibiting read as a who's-who of the world's worst arms dealers.”

“Israel is an apartheid state, and it is disgusting that the U.K. is not only selling weapons to Israel but encouraging Israeli arms companies to sell their weapons in London,” she continued. “Representatives from regimes such as Saudi Arabia, who have used U.K.-made weapons to commit war crimes in Yemen, will be wined and dined and encouraged to buy yet more arms.”

Israel's Ministry of Defence has been welcomed to London to flog its arms.

Here's its stand inside the [#DSEI23](#) arms fair, which is sponsored by the UK Ministry of Defence. pic.twitter.com/5hiU35z9Wh

— Declassified UK (@declassifiedUK) [September 12, 2023](#)

“Deals done at DSEI will cause misery across the world, causing global instability, and devastate people's lives,” Apple added.

Inside ExCel, it was business as usual. [Pressed](#) by *Declassified U.K.* chief reporter Phil Miller on why Britain's right-wing government supports “selling arms to the Saudi dictatorship that sentences someone to death for tweeting,” Minister of State for the Armed Forces James Heappey deflected.

Private sector leaders, however, have been more forthcoming. As Raytheon CEO Greg Hayes [opined](#) during a 2021 investor call touting the company's “solid” growth: “Peace is not going to break out in the Middle East anytime soon.”

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