

# Study War No More: Military Involvement in UK Universities

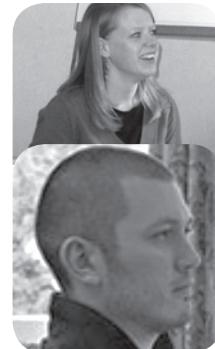
*Martha Beale and Tim Street*

*In December 2007 an innovative report, Study War No More, was published examining military involvement at 26 universities in the United Kingdom in order to highlight the impact military funding has on university departments. Aiming to support students and academics concerned about the impact their institutions have on international peace and conflict, the report encourages debate regarding the democratic deficit within academic institutions and the ends and ethics of research and research funding.*

## Introduction

As a starting place, it is important to put the report into the context of current military and military research and development (R&D) spending. In 2006, global military expenditure exceeded \$1.2 trillion,<sup>1</sup> nearly half of which was spent by the United States.<sup>2</sup> The UK military budget is now the second highest in the world with recent spending of £30 billion in 2005/06. In 2006, the UK was also the third largest arms exporter globally,<sup>3</sup> and is home to several military corporations in the Top 100 companies (according to military revenue) in the world, including BAE Systems (3rd), Rolls Royce (16th) and QinetiQ (36th).<sup>4</sup> Approximately 30%<sup>5</sup> of the total public funds for UK R&D are spent by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), making the United Kingdom the world's second highest funder of military R&D after the US. In 2005/06 approximately £2.4 billion was spent by the MoD on UK R&D,<sup>5</sup> of which an estimated £2.15 billion<sup>6</sup> was spent on "extramural R&D" work which is mostly contracted out to military industry. The rest of the MoD's annual R&D budget (£300-£400 million) is spent on research undertaken in its own research establishments which spend "approximately £20 million per year on research with academia."<sup>7</sup>

Twenty of the universities<sup>8</sup> were chosen as members of the Russell Group, an association of research intensive universities which boasts of securing "65% (£1.8 billion) of UK Universities' research grant and contract income".<sup>9</sup> The remaining six<sup>10</sup> were included to provide a geographical spread across the United Kingdom and, in the cases of Cranfield University and Loughborough University, to include institutions known to have strong connections to the military sector. The report does not cover all military projects at all UK universities, but rather, due to constraints of time and resources, seeks to examine many of those universities most likely to have conducted the greatest number of projects.



Tim Street is the Universities Network Coordinator for Campaign Against Arms Trade. Martha Beale works as the Education and Campaigns Officer for the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Together, both wrote "Study War No More," a report on military involvement in UK universities published in Nov 2007.

## Study War No More

The *Study War No More* report found that between 2001 and 2006, more than 1,900 military projects, worth a minimum of £725 million, were conducted in the 26 universities covered by the report. This research funding was dominated by three multinational companies: Rolls Royce, BAE Systems and QinetiQ, as the sponsors/ partners of over two-thirds of identified military projects. The UK government's military research establishment was found to be involved in a quarter of all military projects at the 26 UK universities, and over half of the military projects were conducted in university engineering departments, with the rest spread over other science and technology departments.

External funding is an issue which academics and students alike are becoming increasingly concerned about. The report found that military organisations' relationships with universities can be broken down into two main elements: firstly, direct funding of research conducted by university departments in partnership with, or on behalf of, a military organisation (this form made up the majority of cases); secondly, military-related projects such as student and staff sponsorship, donations and the funding of events. The *Study War No More* report considers how much influence military organisations have over research priorities and to what extent public money is supporting the development of military technology and the profits of arms companies.

*Study War No More* is one of the first studies to use extensively the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act passed by British Government in 2000, allowing much greater accessibility of information in British public institutions. Utilising the Freedom of Information Act was an important part of the data collection for the report, and the authors found a huge disparity in the amount and quality of data in the FoI replies received from universities responding to the same original request. Much of the data proved incomplete due to

limitations on the amount of information universities were prepared to provide free of charge; while other times requested data proved to be inaccessible due to system updates, institutional takeovers and storage of information. In addition to genuine problems with data-retrieval and the sheer volume of data received, universities had very different attitudes to the provision of information. Many universities were unfamiliar with and had inadequate provisions for FoI. Some omitted funding later revealed by other sources (such as the university's own website) or led us to believe they had provided all relevant information when data was later found proving that this wasn't the case. While legislative requirements created a lengthy process for FoI requests, this was exacerbated by a small number of universities which, on occasion, appeared to abuse FoI regulations. Unfortunately this small number appeared to take the FoI requests as personal criticisms rather than legitimate appeals for information and transparency. Some universities responded by applying exemptions which allowed them to not provide information due to military secrecy and commercial confidentiality.

## Funding

*Study War No More* sought to uncover as much information as possible on the external funding provided by the military sector. However, its authors recognise its limitations as an incomplete record of university-military research. By seeing the report as a foundation document, the authors' hope is that the report will motivate others to continue researching this area and that it will act as a basis on which people can create, develop and sustain a campaign.

The recommendations of the report are concerned with building greater transparency, accountability and democracy within UK universities. The recommendations encourage students and academics to research and publicise the military funding received by their university to start discussions, using



this information as a basis to lobby for democratic change within them. The report includes potential campaign goals for groups who are interested in working on the issue:

- Creating a central register (including data provided by the government) of all university ties with military and/or industrial funders to include funding sources and any other industrial connections. Funding sources and business links should be declared, where relevant, in academic and departmental publications.

- Requiring academics, on their departmental web pages for example, to state the funding they have taken from external organisations, what this funding was for and who provided it. Ideally, this information should be presented unambiguously and with thought given to readers unfamiliar with technical jargon and the sponsors/partners involved, so that it is clear what the project in question involves. Academics should also highlight any other professional connections that they have with public bodies and companies such as advisory roles or secondments.

- The establishment of an ethics committee whose members could include university managers e.g. the Vice-Chancellor, academics, students and representatives from industry, to review research with military applications.

- Setting up links with other universities (whether at a student, academic, union or institutional basis) in order to lobby universities for the above changes and government for a reprioritisation of public support away from military projects and towards civil and socially useful projects at UK universities.



- Academics rejecting funding from projects with military sponsors and/or with likely military applications and seeking alternative work which provides civil benefits to society, for example, by helping to address social and/or environmental problems.

As Chris Langley, author of *Soldiers in the Laboratory: Military Involvement in Science and Technology – and some alternatives*, in the foreword of the report says: “This report is a must-read for all those contemplating a career in science, technology or engineering and for those of us who believe that social justice, a healthy environment and a sustainable economy, rather than highly expensive and complex military technologies, are the basis of a safe and secure world.”

Fellowship of Reconciliation initiated the project in winter 2005, as a way to engage young people, and provide them with an opportunity to link their lives with the wider peace and conflict issues in the world. Other projects FoR is currently involved in include running an annual peace conference for

18 to 30 (ish) year olds, providing talks, workshops and trainings in schools, colleges and universities, and linking with its international partners. FoR, England is part of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation which has approximately 70 branches, groups and affiliates in 40 different countries across the world.

The *Study War No More* report is jointly published by Fellowship of Reconciliation, England ([www.for.org.uk](http://www.for.org.uk)) and Campaign Against Arms Trade ([www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk)). For further information and to download the report, visit the campaign website at <http://www.studywarnomore.org.uk/>.

1 Petter Stålenheim, Catalina Perdomo and Elisabeth Sköns, SIPRI Yearbook 2007, <http://yearbook2007.sipri.org/chap8/>.

2 SIPRI Programme on Military Expenditure and Arms Production, ‘The 15 major spender countries in 2006,’ [http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex\\_trends.html](http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_trends.html).

3 Taken from the US Congressional Research Service report, ‘Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations 1999-2006’, 26 September 2007.

4 2006 Defense News Top 100, <http://defensenews.com/index.php?S=07top100>.

5 Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, *op. cit.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, ‘SBRI Participants Performance,’ <http://www.dti.gov.uk/innovation/sbri/page39902.html>.

8 Research Acquisition Organisation Yearbook, *op. cit.*

9 Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial College London, King’s College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics and Political Science, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Queen’s University Belfast, Oxford, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London, Warwick.

10 ‘The Russell Group,’ <http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/>.

11 Cranfield, Durham, Hull, Loughborough, Swansea, York.

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