

Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade



Dear friends and subscribers,

November 11, 2009

In July of 2008, when I first learned from online military sources that organizers of Canadian war bazaars had their sights set on returning to Ottawa municipal property for the first time in 20 years, I started spreading the word to raise awareness and stir up opposition. The struggle since then has been the latest chapter in a decades-long effort to oppose Canada's role in the international weapons trade.

When I started COAT in 1989, the goal was to counter what was then Canada's largest arms bazaar, ARMX. A major success of that first COAT campaign was Ottawa Council's landmark decision to ban all military trade shows from City property! That historic ban—the only such resolution I've ever heard of, anywhere in the world—kept these war spectacles off city property in our nation's capital for two full decades!

Although ARMX was soon defunct, it was replaced in the mid-1990s by an equally-offensive event called CANSEC, which was held at an Ontario government facility called the Ottawa Congress Centre.

Because of COAT's history, the return of arms exhibitions to Ottawa property was something I took personally. Working for COAT, I took on the task of alerting activists across Canada and sparked local meetings to organize strategies and public events. I worked overtime producing the basic campaign materials that were used to protest "Secure Canada," a new US-led military trade show that got its foot in the door of Ottawa facilities. When that event was eventually cancelled in late 2008, many activists felt encouraged.

However, in January 2009, during Israel's bombardment of Gaza, I set aside an almost completed issue of *Press for Conversion!* to begin extensive new research into Canada's military exports to Israel. Much of that work focused on revealing the names and products of many Canadian war industries supplying Israel that were soon to be exhibiting their wares at the CANSEC arms bazaar in May 2009.

COAT's contribution to the broadly-based campaign against Canada's largest weapons exhibition included doing the research, writing and layout of campaign materials such as posters, flyers and fact sheets. I wrote numerous articles for local and national publications, and produced reports compiling data on CANSEC exhibitors and their part in building dozens of major weapons systems. COAT's online petition against CANSEC was signed by thousands, and our email list was used to inform thousands more across Canada. COAT's website became the online centre for a widespread grassroots effort against Ottawa's arms bazaars.

Unfortunately however, because I poured myself completely into this work against CANSEC, *Press for Conversion!* temporarily fell by the wayside. Although the peace movement's anti-CANSEC efforts concluded in June—when Ottawa Council voted overwhelmingly to reverse its 20-year stand against military trade events—I continued throughout the summer to research CANSEC and to put together this issue of COAT's magazine.

I hope you will find this issue to be a useful resource for challenging Canada's multibillion dollar role in fuelling horrendous wars like the ones that are still raging in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For half my life now, I've been working full-time to oppose war and to expose those who profit from it. *It hasn't been easy, financially, emotionally, or in any other way.* Your support is very much appreciated.

COAT needs your continued help and assistance. Please subscribe or renew your subscription to *Press for Conversion!* Tell others about this work and, if you can afford it, please make a donation to COAT.

Cheers!

Richard Sanders
Coordinator, COAT
Editor, *Press for Conversion!*

P.S. I hope you'll find this issue of COAT's publication to be interesting and useful. **If so, PLEASE order some extra copies and make a donation to help COAT's ongoing work.** *Thanks very much.*