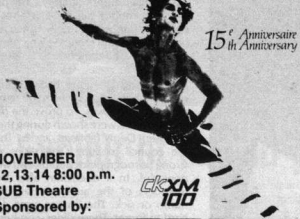


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Canadian arms

**by James Young
Canadian University Press**

As the Iran-Contra affair made daily headlines in the United States in November 1986, Canadians were shocked by reports that Canadian-built helicopter parts had been shipped to Iran, with Ottawa's military approval. Experts said the engine components could be used by military helicopters in the war against Iraq, a conflict which had already left 500,000 dead.

Canadians' shock was not really justified. There was indeed scandal and embarrassment on Parliament Hill, since

Military exports have tripled within the last six years.

the shipments flouted a policy to refuse direct arms sales to war zones. But Canadian aircraft engines were already being used by both Iran and Iraq, after being "transformed" into military equipment by factories in Switzerland and Brazil.

The Iranian parts are not the exception to the rule.

The Canadian arms industry has been involved in almost all the world's current trouble spots including the U.S. bombing of Libya in the spring of 1986, the invasion of Grenada in 1983, and the on-going civil war in El Salvador. In addition, Canadian arms manufacturers play a large part in the construction of American nuclear missiles.

This information, accompanied by a wealth of documen-

tation, is provided by Ernie Regehr, in his new book, *Arms Canada: The Deadly Business of Military Exports*.

"Canadians are reluctant to include the role of weapons merchant in their self-definition," says Regehr, research director for Project Ploughshares at the University of Waterloo.

But Canada's arms export industry is now worth \$2 billion annually. Eighty-five per cent of these exports go to the U.S. but there are further direct shipments to at least 45 countries, including such brutal human rights violators as Chile, Guatemala, Pakistan and South Korea.

"Canada's production of military commodities for export has tripled within the past six years," says Regehr.

With 20 million casualties in the 100 wars in the third world since 1945, and Canada producing about one per cent of the weapons and components exported there, Regehr infers that our country has been responsible for 200,000 deaths abroad. The estimate may not be verifiable, but it makes a point—Canadians are unwitting participants in international violence.

Researching *Arms Canada* was not easy, says Regehr, thanks to government secrecy and the so-called Access to Information Act.

In November 1985, after requesting information on the permits which accompany military exports, Regehr received a sample from External Affairs, with the explanation that "you will note that considerable information will probably be exempted."

Regehr calls that note "a remarkable example of understatement." The sample permit was essentially a

blank piece of paper.

The accompanying letter that the rest of the document cost \$3000, the price of censored research is accurate.

But Regehr feels confident that his research is accurate.

"I've been told that Ernie intended to really tear strips if they found errors," he hasn't found those errors



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