



# Amnesty International

Orange County

GROUP 141 ORANGE • GROUP 175 LONG BEACH  
GROUP 178 IRVINE • GROUP 596 HUNTINGTON BEACH

October 2009

<http://www.aiusaoc.org>

## Legal Loopholes Allow Questionable Arms Dealers to Obtain Defense Contracts

*This article is taken from a September 30 AI press release.*

Amnesty International published today a new report charging that millions of taxpayer dollars have landed in the hands of at least six arms dealers with problematic backgrounds who transferred arms abroad, due to loopholes in the U.S. Department of Defense's (DoD) hiring of private contractors.

The six arms intermediaries examined in the report, *Dealing with Arms Intermediaries: The Pentagon's Missing Controls on Contractors Engaged in Arms Transfers*, include Aeroacom (Moldovan air cargo firm), Petr Bernatik (Czech arms broker), Irbis (Kazakhstan air cargo firm), Henrich Thomet (Swiss arms broker), Bao Ping Ma/Poly Technologies (Chinese arms broker and manufacturing firm) and Tomislav Damjanovic (Serbian arms broker and freight forwarder).

Some of the above are listed by the United Nations as being involved in violating U.N. arms embargos on Angola and Liberia. One was previously accused of trafficking rocket-propelled grenades to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Another's agent has been indicted by a U.S. federal grand jury for smuggling weapons into the United States for use by organized crime. Many of them have been involved in attempts to arm human rights violators.

"The fact that someone can be accused and/or indicted for U.S. or foreign arms trafficking and still receive American tax dollars to transfer weapons boggles the mind," said Larry Cox, Amnesty International USA executive director. "This happens simply because DoD does not have a specific regulation that prohibits U.S. companies or individuals from subcontracting to questionable actors. DoD procedures in this vital area seem to be missing in action."

However, the U.S. State Department's Directorate for Defense Trade Controls (DDTC), which manages U.S. and foreign arms intermediaries involved in U.S. commercial arms exports, has established more stringent controls. DDTC automatically excludes individuals or companies that have been indicted for violating U.S. arms control laws, and it has a greater ability to prohibit others that are connected with U.N. arms embargo violations.

In many cases, however, DoD private contractors engaged in international arms transfers do not have to comply with DDTC's controls if the transfer is government to government. Conversely, U.S. citizens and residents must be approved by DDTC to export or broker weapons to foreign entities. DoD's

new authorities for transferring arms such as, the Iraq Security Forces Fund and Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006, have fewer controls than traditional U.S. government-to-government arms transfer programs, such as Foreign Military Sales, which are managed by DoD.

"While the U.S. government has made some efforts to prevent contracts with known arms traffickers in the last few years, there is a great risk that taxpayer dollars will continue to fund known violators of U.N. arms embargos and other profiteers of violent conflict," said Colby Goodman, the author of this report. "DoD needs to do more to avoid funding arms traffickers that often fuel grave human rights violations abroad by immediately closing these gaping loopholes."

Among its recommendations, Amnesty International USA urged the U.S. Department of Defense to:

- 1) Stipulate that DoD will not hire any prime contractor or subcontractor where there is credible evidence that they have been involved in: a) violating U.S. or foreign national laws related to arms control; b) breaking regional or global arms embargoes established by the U.N., E.U., or other multilateral bodies; or, c) helping transfer arms to entities that have engaged in gross violations of international human rights or humanitarian law
- 2) Create mechanisms to help identify known arms traffickers such as an internal watch list similar to the one created and maintained by the State Department's DDTC
- 3) Require DoD prime contractors bidding for any arms transfer contract to list all of their subcontractors at every tier, including arms brokers, before receiving an award
- 4) Add a clause in DoD arms transfer contracts when DoD uses its new authorities to train and equip foreign security forces that prime contractors must get a license or approval from the State Department's DDTC in order to receive funds.

"The egregious oversight by DoD to not review U.S. prime contractors' partners at all levels involved in the U.S. government's weapons program can be easily corrected with a simple solution," said Cox. "All companies and individuals at every level must be reviewed and certified by DoD. Let's ensure Americans' hard-earned money doesn't go into the hands of those who help fuel harm against innocent civilians around the globe."

## September Meeting Minutes

### Group #141 Orange

#### Letter-writing

We wrote letters:

- to executives at three internet service providers in China asking that they preserve the rights to freedom of expression and privacy for internet users.
- to Chinese officials on behalf of Shi Tao.
- to President Obama urging that he end the use of rendition and secret detention, reject indefinite detention, and set up an independent commission to investigate torture and other human rights violations by the U.S. government.
- to the Sri Lanka president asking that he allow civilians there who had fled the war zone to leave internment camps.

#### New Prisoner Case

We discussed our new adopted prisoners of conscience in Myanmar, U Saw Naing and U Soe Han, sentenced to 21 years each in 2000 for publishing a statement that urged the release of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2000.

## September Meeting Minutes

### Group #175 Long Beach

#### Present

Lizette Ashcraft, Nancy Darling, Norma Edwards, Deidre Gaffney, JoAnne Kaabar, Jim Roberts

#### Welcome!

Naomi wasn't able to join us, but a friend of hers was brave enough to come meet us anyway. Nancy Darling is a longtime member/first-time meeting-attender. She helped us write letters and told us (a little) about her former life in New Guinea and working in the health care industry. We hope to see her again!

#### Burma/Myanmar

- We have officially adopted our new Prisoner of Conscience (POC), Zarganar. Zarganar is a famous actor, comedian, and film director in Myanmar who was arrested in June 2008. He eventually received a 35-year sentence under the vaguely worded Electronics Act. It appears the real reason for his imprisonment is his attempt to help the victims of Cyclone Nargis, criticizing and embarrassing the government in the process. Amnesty International is concerned for his health (and there have been torture allegations) and is calling for his immediate release. You will be hearing more about our POC in the future.
- There are now 2,211 political prisoners in Myanmar by Amnesty's count. Amnesty is considering calling on the United Nations Security Council to appoint a commission of inquiry to look into charges of crimes against humanity in Myanmar; specifically, military crimes against the civilian population in operations against the insurgency. Jim told us that there are 1/2 million internal refugees in Myanmar and 750,000 refugees in Thailand.
- Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyers had a hearing on September 18 to appeal her sentence. A decision on the appeal is expected on October 2. Don't hold your breath.

#### Walk for Hope

Please join us for this wonderful event. And sponsor us if you can't! The event is free and lots of fun as well as thought-provoking. You can read about it at <http://www.bethecause.org/walkforhope/web/>. If you would like to volunteer at the Amnesty table, contact Norma at [beachykeeno@yahoo.com](mailto:beachykeeno@yahoo.com).

## Upcoming Events

### Walk for Hope

Amnesty International USA Group 175 (Long Beach) will have a table at the Walk For Hope. You can participate in the walk and also donate to the group!

The Walk for Hope is at El Dorado Regional Park, 7550 East Spring Street, Long Beach, on Saturday, October 17, 9:00 AM–1:00 PM. Get there by 10:00 AM at the latest to join the main group of walkers, though you can do the walk and join in the events at any time. There will be live music, free food, and many booths for local non-profits. A great event for kids! Younger children can bring their bikes and bike the route. Free!

- Stop by the AI table and sign our letter-writing actions.
- Donate: This is one of our groups' yearly fund-raisers. We spend hundreds of dollars each year on postage alone for our human rights work. Here is your chance to help us financially in our work. At the Walk For Hope website for registered non-profits, you can donate to Amnesty International Group 175 (go to our web page to find out how to donate). Any amount, however small, will help!
- AI members: If you have free time, volunteer to staff the table for a short period of time and answer questions about Amnesty International. If you plan on spending time as a helper at the AI table, please email Norma Edwards at [beachykeeno@yahoo.com](mailto:beachykeeno@yahoo.com).

For more information, go to [http://www.aiusaoc.org/longbeach/walk\\_for\\_hope\\_2009.html](http://www.aiusaoc.org/longbeach/walk_for_hope_2009.html).

### Death Penalty Activist Training

The Los Angeles County Coalition for Death Penalty Alternatives are holding an activist training to help stop death sentencing in Los Angeles County on Sunday, October 18, 2:00–5:00 PM, at the ACLU office, 1313 West 8th Street, Los Angeles. For more information, visit [www.enddeathpenaltyla.org](http://www.enddeathpenaltyla.org).

### Western Regional Conference

Amnesty International USA's 2009 Western Regional Conference will be held November 6–8, at the San Francisco Hilton, 333 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco.

Join other Amnesty International activists from around the Western Region for an inspiring weekend affirming the full spectrum of rights and human dignity for all. The conference theme, "Free and Equal in Dignity and Rights" will highlight the recently launched Demand Dignity Campaign which focuses on empowering communities and human rights defenders to win equal access to human rights while demanding accountability for human rights abuses.

Visit [www.amnestyusa.org/regional-conferences/west/page.do?id=1650028](http://www.amnestyusa.org/regional-conferences/west/page.do?id=1650028) for registration information. The registration deadline is October 23.

## September Meeting Minutes

### Group #178 Irvine

At our September meeting we had to move into a small side room of Plumer Hall because the main room in Plumer Hall was being used, and the sanctuary was also unavailable. The church administrator mentioned that usually, in those cases, we are told that we can not meet at the church. We will have to think of a back-up plan.

At our meeting we were happy to have several first-time visitors, including students from Orange Coast College and Northwood.

#### Letter-writing

We wrote letters

- to Lithuania asking for rejection of legislation that would prohibit the public portrayal of homosexuality or any information relating to it
- to France asking the government to refrain from transferring asylum-seekers back to Greece where they are held in poor condition and risk forcible return to countries where they may face torture
- we also signed a petition asking for commutation of the death sentence for Troy Davis.

#### Finances

Felicity mentioned that it would be nice if we occasionally sent a donation to IUCC for using the room, and we will be sending \$25 or more per quarter, as finances allow. As we customarily do, we voted to encourage members who are attending the Western Regional Conference with a \$100 sponsorship. Julie and Hasti, two of our visiting students, will be applying for the sponsorship and attending the conference. Jacques also plans on attending.

#### Campaigns

Jacques Kilchoer reported on the Europe Regional Action Network:

- 28 August 2009: Lithuania had a secret prison near the capital Vilnius, where CIA operatives interrogated terrorism suspects. This is the latest country along with Poland and Romania accused of having colluded with the US.
- 8 September 2009: As we remember from last month, the Lithuanian Parliament overrode a presidential veto to put into effect a law prohibiting (amongst other things) "Information which agitates for homosexual, bisexual and polygamous relations". In the fall of 2009, new legislative amendments have been put forward for consideration during the Autumn session which begins on 10 September 2009. These legislative proposals go even further as they

would criminalise the "promotion of homosexual relations in public places". (see letter-writing action)

- 11 September 2009: Roma families forcibly evicted in Italy
- 19 September 2009: Hundreds of asylum seekers at risk of expulsion from France (see letter-writing action)

#### Upcoming Events

- Sunday, 25 October 2009: Concert Tabling for U2, Pasadena Rose Bowl. Anne Saxe and Kolua Seiko from our group will be staffing the AI table.
- Human Rights Day, 10 December 2009: Write-a-thon: Group 178 will have a write-a-thon at Irvine United Congregational Church on the Sunday immediately preceding (6 December) or following (13 December) Human Rights Day. We will have the date confirmed by our next meeting.

#### Troy Davis Teach-in

We had a spirited discussion of the death penalty, with one of our student visitors showing herself to be well-versed in the topic, and others discussing if the death penalty is really unnecessary in all cases. We also reviewed the weaknesses in the case of Troy Davis. To recap in brief: there was no physical evidence against Troy Davis; the weapon used in the crime was never found; the case against him consists entirely of witness testimony; seven of the nine non-police witnesses have recanted or contradicted their testimony; many of the witnesses have stated that they were pressured or coerced by police; one of the two witnesses who has not recanted or contradicted testimony is the principal alternative suspect; Nine individuals have signed affidavits implicating the alternative suspect; and there has never been an evidentiary hearing in a federal appeals court to examine the new witness testimony.

#### Past Event

- 19 September 2009: Group 178 (Irvine) partnered with Orange County for Darfur to show the movie *The Reckoning*, a documentary showing the work of the prosecutors of the International Criminal Court (ICC). We had a good turnout, including several people from Sudan who found out about our event after Peggy publicized it at the Genocide Intervention Network site. After the movie ended, the audience stayed for a half-hour discussion of what people in the US should do and can do about these human rights violations. See the event report at <http://www.aiusaoc.org/common/blog.html>.

#### October Meeting

At our October meeting, we will have have a presentation by a special speaker on the May 2006 human rights violations that occurred in San Salvador Atenco, Mexico. See our website for details: [www.aiusaoc.org/irvine/atenco.html](http://www.aiusaoc.org/irvine/atenco.html).

If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter and supporting the work of the Orange County and Long Beach Amnesty International groups, please return this coupon to the address shown with annual dues of \$10.00. Dues cover the costs of this newsletter and of stamps used for saving lives. Your address label contains your membership expiration date. Join us!

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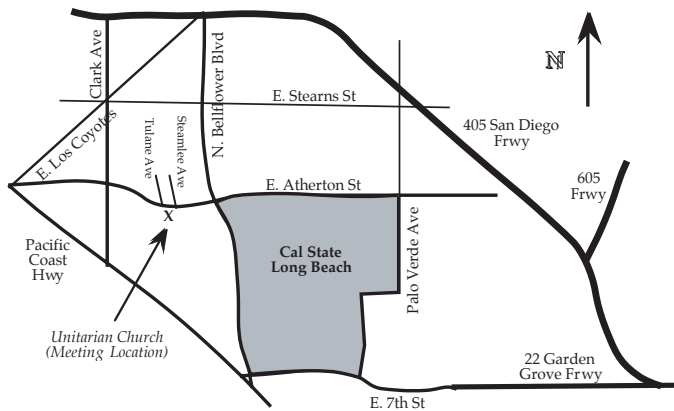
Please make your check payable to Amnesty International. Contributions to AI are tax-deductible. Thank you for your interest and support!

# Calendar October

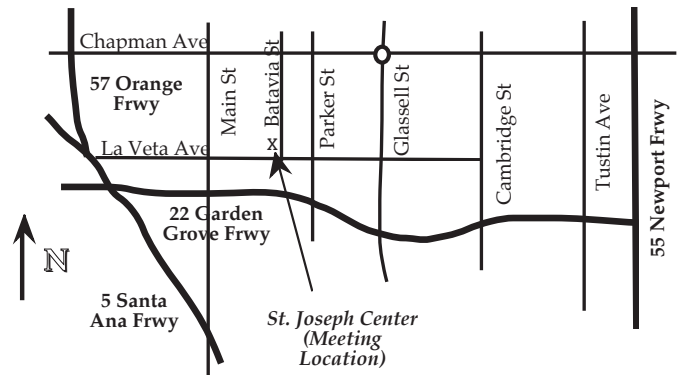
- 17 Saturday 9:00 AM–1:00 PM**  
**Walk for Hope** at El Dorado Regional Park, 7550 East Spring Street, Long Beach. For more information, see the article on page 2 of this newsletter.
- 21 Wednesday 7:00 PM**  
**Group #175 Long Beach Monthly Meeting** at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Rooms 1 and 2, 5450 Atherton Street, Long Beach. Letter-writing from 7:00–7:30. For more information about the group, contact Norma Edwards at (562) 425-4353.

- 27 Tuesday 7:00 PM**  
**Group #141 Orange Monthly Meeting** at the Sisters of St. Joseph Center, 480 S. Batavia Street, in Orange. The meeting room is in the Special Events Center located behind (west of) the main building (the Motherhouse). After entering the complex from Batavia Street, drive around the south side of the Motherhouse and park in the lot in the back. Look for the signs directing you to the meeting room. For more information about the group, contact Kevin Gaffney at [xhuskr@aol.com](mailto:xhuskr@aol.com).

- 29 Thursday 7:30 PM**  
**Group #178 Irvine Monthly Meeting** at the Irvine United Congregational Church, 4915 Alton Parkway, Irvine. For more information about the group, contact Jacques Kilchoer at [jacques.kilchoer@aiousaoc.org](mailto:jacques.kilchoer@aiousaoc.org).



**Group #175 Long Beach Meeting Location**



**Group #141 Orange Meeting Location**

Amnesty International Group #141  
 320 12th Street #8  
 Seal Beach, CA 90740