

Will BAE Scandal Sink U.K. End Run on U.S. Arms Law?

Britain's request for a blanket exemption to a U.S. law requiring review of arms sales to foreign nations may be the next victim of the oil, arms, and corruption scandal now engulfing Britain, and threatening to expose a nexus of Anglo-Dutch geopolitical control reaching back half a century.

The United Kingdom and Australia already enjoy "expedited" approval under the U.S. Arms Export Control Act, but still may have to wait up to a month for approval of export licenses. With Britain's scandal-ridden BAE Systems moving to take over a large share of U.S. arms manufacturing, the waiver of export license requirements would mean a major boost both to their balance sheet and covert military capabilities.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Clinton Administration began to soften export requirements on conventional arms. In 2000, it was proposed that Britain and Australia be granted exemptions from the licensing process. But Congress has stymied such an agreement, often demanding that Britain strengthen its laws governing exports to third countries as a condition for the exemption. As the al-Yamamah agreements with Prince Bandar demonstrate, Britain has had virtual free rein to use its own nation's arms sales as an instrument in foreign subversion and financial operations. A lifting of U.S. regulations would strengthen that capability.

The *Financial Times* of London reported June 15 that

negotiations for Britain to get the long-sought waiver were nearly complete, and would be marked as a big victory for outgoing Prime Minister Tony Blair. But the Democratic Congress can, and most probably will, sandbag that wishful delusion in any number of ways. "The fact that we have not been consulted at all could likely prejudice this negotiation," a Congressional aide told the paper.

One of the advocates for the deal is Dov Zakheim, an undersecretary and comptroller in the Bush Defense Department from 2001 to 2004, who is suspected of maintaining slush funds to finance illegal covert operations run by Pentagon civilians in the Cheney camp. Zakheim was a member of the Vulcans, the private foreign policy advisory team controlled by George Shultz and consisting almost entirely of Leo Strauss disciples, which concocted the disastrous pre-emptive war strategy of the Cheney-Bush Administration, even before Bush became President.

A major stumbling block to efforts to sneak through the British licensing exemption is that it is in reality a treaty. Article II of the U.S. Constitution grants the President the power to make treaties, but requires the concurrence of two-thirds of the Senate to make them law.

Sen. John Warner, the senior Republican on the Armed Services Committee, apparently brushed over this little problem in telling the *Financial Times*, "Despite the name, the document itself would carry a strong message ... that Great Britain is our most trusted ally. Whether it be Labour or Tory government, we have got to be side by side on these major national security issues."

That sort of gullibility, which has led otherwise sensible figures in our government to place such unrestricted trust in the nation's historic enemy, is fast evaporating with each turn in the Bandar BAE exposé.