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Arming Big Brother: new research reveals the true costs of Europe's security-industrial complex

The European Union is preparing to spend up to €1 billion per year on new 'research' into surveillance and control technologies, according to *Arming Big Brother*, a new report by the Transnational Institute (TNI) and Statewatch.

"Arms industry lobbying is leading to the creation of a powerful new internal security-industrial complex," says Ben Hayes, author of the report.

Arming Big Brother lifts the lid on the secretive committees and arms industry lobbying that led to the creation of the European Security Research Programme (ESRP). In 2003, a 'Group of Personalities' (GoP) comprised of EU officials and Europe's biggest arms and IT companies, argued that European multinationals need one billion euros per year so they can compete with US multinationals and the US government's funding of 'Homeland Security' research.

The GoP's demands were endorsed by the European Commission, which ignored its own rules on EU research expenditure to begin funding 'security' research immediately. The Commission has also appointed a European Security Research Advisory Board (ESRAB) to develop and implement the future ESRP. ESRAB includes at least 14 defence companies amongst its 50 members, but no one from the European Parliament or the EU Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies.

"The ESRP is completely unaccountable and gives multinational corporations an unacceptable role in EU decision-making. This is contributing to a European security agenda in the corporate rather than the public interest," says Hayes.

This claim is backed up by the evidence of the 24 projects that have already received funding from the Commission: military organisations and defence sector contractors are leading 17 of them. This includes two high-level 'studies' on EU security policy, one led by the European Association of Aerospace and Defence Industries (ASD, Europe's largest defence industry lobby group), the other by the defence giant Thales. Another 10 projects deal with research into high-tech surveillance systems.

The TNI-Statewatch report suggests that the EU 'security research' programme is - like the idea of 'dual-use' technologies - simply providing cover for military subsidies and lucrative government contracts.

"The EU is basically funding the diversification of the 'military-industrial complex' into the highly profitable internal security field", said Hayes.

"The militarisation of policing and border controls will not prevent crime or terrorism", said Hayes, "it does nothing to address 'root causes' while posing a massive threat to civil liberties".

"The EU should be regulating the trade in security technology, not lavishing it with taxpayers money in an unaccountable fashion".

A five page summary of Arming Big Brother can be downloaded from:

<<http://www.statewatch.org/news/2006/apr/bigbro-summary.pdf>>

The full report is available at <<http://www.statewatch.org/news/2006/apr/bigbrother.pdf>>

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