

Britain to close arms sales office

by UPI

LONDON - Britain is planning to close a government office that helps arms dealers sell equipment abroad, it was reported Monday.

The secretive Defense Export Services Organization, with 450 workers, subsidizes weapons giants such as BAE, Britain's largest arms firm, the Guardian reported.

DESO was established in 1966 when the British arms industry was largely state-owned and had surplus equipment to sell. Today, DESO spends \$30 million a year helping British firms sell their equipment, the paper reported.

Opponents claim arms dealers, through DESO, receive more support than any other British industry and DESO always is headed by an arms company executive whose goal is to push the industry's interests within the government, the Guardian said.

DESO is under investigation for approving \$2 billion in payments from BAE to Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia. The British arms industry sells around \$10 billion of equipment a year to foreign governments with DESO's help, the paper said.

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