

British Aerospace (BAE) World's Biggest Weapons Firm

Ranking bt the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

By [Global Research](#)

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STOCKHOLM, Sweden – Britain's BAE Systems topped an international ranking of the world's biggest arms groups, becoming the first non-American company to hold the spot, a leading defense think tank said April 12.

The British group knocked defense giant Boeing out of the top position in 2008, according to the ranking of biggest defense groups worldwide tallied by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

"The main reason that BAE became the largest arms-producing company in the world in 2008 is the increase in its U.S. sales, which outpaced decreases elsewhere, including in the U.K.," the think tank said in the study.

With arms sales in 2008 of \$29.2 billion (21.6 billion euros), Boeing fell from first place in 2007 to third, following BAE Systems (\$32.4 billion) and Lockheed Martin (\$29.4 billion).

It was followed by three U.S. firms – Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics and Raytheon. Others in the top 10 included EADS (7th place), Italian firm Finmeccanica (8th), L-3 Communications (9th) and France's Thales (10th).

The biggest Russian group on the list, air defense systems maker Almaz-Antei, was 18th on the list.

In 2008, the 100 biggest defense groups had arms sales of \$385 billion, up 11 percent from the previous year, according to SIPRI.

"This is more than three times the size of the total development aid of OECD countries in 2008," SIPRI said, noting that such aid reached \$120 billion.

Putting the data in perspective, SIPRI said that arms sales of Lockheed Martin alone topped U.S. development aid by \$4 billion, and that BAE Systems' sales were greater than the gross domestic product of 105 countries.

SIPRI's rankings focus on companies' arms sales, which make up only 48 percent of Boeing's turnover and 70 percent of Lockheed Martin's revenues. In BAE's case, arms sales make up a far larger share of its sales, with 95 percent of the total.

Born out of the merger of Marconi and British Aerospace in 1999, BAE Systems counts among its products the Eurofighter combat aircraft, the Bradley tank and the Astute

submarine.

With 59 percent of BAE Systems' sales coming from the U.S. arms market, the group has major production operations in the country as well as in Britain, Sweden, South Africa and Sweden.

"BAE really shows the increasing internationalization of the arms industry and the attractiveness of the U.S. market," SIPRI arms industry expert Susan Jackson said.

The group has benefitted from sales of mine-resistant, ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicles to the U.S. government for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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