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**Case 06.1: Deadly Walls – Border Security around
Saudi Arabia (long version)**

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Deadly Walls – Border Security around Saudi Arabia (Long Version)

In 2004, the then defence contractor EADS, now Airbus, landed a contract for what is still considered the world's largest border security program today. The client was the Saudi Arabian royal family, the order value was around 2 billion euros. Airbus was commissioned to build an approximately 9,000-kilometer-long high-tech fence on the country's northern and southern borders. The goal was to prevent the infiltration of Islamist terrorists from countries such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen, to stop arms smuggling and to halt refugee movements.

The World's Largest Border Security Project

One could dismiss this mission as the spawn of paranoid madness in the minds of a stinking rich Arab elite that rules its country with an iron hand and cares little about human rights. Were it not for the fact that Saudi Arabia, in a military coalition with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Qatar (until 2017), Jordan (until 2019), Sudan and - since May 2015 - Senegal is waging a bloody war of attrition in Yemen, that has already claimed tens of thousands of victims in this "poorhouse of Arabia" and in which millions of people are starving. Secondly, if it were not for the fact that European companies such as Airbus and Rheinmetall have been supplying weapons to this region for years, including major weapon systems such as fighter planes and warships. And thirdly, if it were not for the fact that the contract with Airbus includes the participation of German federal police officers who train the Saudi border guards.

Many of the components of the weapon systems are manufactured in Germany, e.g. parts of the fuselage of the Airbus Eurofighter/Typhoon fighter aircraft. These include the cannon for the Typhoon and Tornado, including ammunition and bombs from Rheinmetall Defence. All this makes Germany, Spain and England, where the Typhoon is produced, as well as Italy, where the Rheinmetall bombs are manufactured, accomplices in a war that mainly claims civilian victims and in which many children die of hunger and diseases such as cholera.

A Double Profit for Arms Producers

In addition to the Eurofighters (18 delivered so far, another 54 ordered), the Saudi Arabian Air Force also owns 82 Tornado fighters, the components of which were also largely manufactured in Germany. The jets were fully assembled in Spain and then delivered to the Saudi Kingdom from the UK. Tornados of the war coalition are also involved in the air attacks in Yemen.

Companies such as Airbus profit doubly: they supply high-tech weapons for billions, and they make billions more by setting up border protection facilities, one of whose aims is to prevent people affected by the war from fleeing - also to

Europe.

Two rows of electric and barbed-wire fences on thousands of kilometers of hot Sand deserts, plus motion detector and radar. In less impassable border sections, which could possibly be overcome without additional security measures, high-tech comes to the rescue. The diagram which can be viewed in the following article <http://t.co/QqgDrb9dtV?amp=1> shows how impenetrable this fence is in large part.

Behind a rampart, which is difficult to climb because of the desert sand that slides down, the first metal barrier follows, then a second one reinforced with barbed wire. Motion detectors and ground sensors are concealed in a 100-meter wide corridor, before another high barbed-wire fence follows along a road on which military vehicles with planted machine guns and radars patrol. This is shown by pictures from Airbus advertising material:

Armaments

The Saudi border troops are partly equipped with Heckler & Koch G3 and G-36 assault rifles from their own licensed production. Apart from missiles and rockets of various makes, the Saudi combat aircraft of the Eurofighter and Tornado types are armed with guns from Rheinmetall Defence.

Virtual Barriers

Actacor is the name Airbus gives to its land and sea-based monitoring systems. These systems can record every square meter of land and sea area in a given territory and transmit this information to large wall screens in the monitoring centers. Actacor is a production division of Airbus Defence and Space. This Airbus division employs 38,000 people worldwide and has a turnover of 14 billion euros. Many components of border surveillance technology are developed and produced in Germany: e.g. in Immenstaad on Lake Constance with 2,250 employees¹. According to Airbus, (quote) "command, reconnaissance and surveillance systems" as well as "target display drones for civil and military customers" and "platform manufacturers for helicopters, combat aircraft, transport aircraft and UAVs" (= unmanned aerial vehicles = drones, i.e.) are developed and built there².

The Lake Constance region is one of the main locations for the construction of technology to prevent refugees from escaping war, hunger and misery. German personnel is also involved: the Airbus engineers who develop the facilities and the workers who build and assemble them. In addition, there are federal police officers

¹ *Wikipedia (n.d.a). Airbus. Wikipedia (Online Encyclopedia). Archived from original on September 16th, 2020, available at https://web.archive.org/web/20200916031259/https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Airbus_Grupp*

² *Ibid.*

who train their Saudi colleagues in how to handle border security measures³.

Temporary Suspension of Construction

In the fall of 2018, it looked as if the German federal government would put a stop to the whole thing. After the Saudi journalist Jamal Kashoggi was brutally murdered in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul, Chancellor Merkel and the Federal Security Council decided to stop all arms deliveries to Saudi Arabia and the VAR. The Airbus border security system under construction was also affected. The deployment of federal police to train Saudi border personnel was suspended.

But just one year later, the German government announced that it would resume training. Although the ban on the export of military equipment was extended for another six months until March 2020, arms policy observers consider it likely that the supply of individual parts for European joint projects such as the Eurofighter will continue despite the arms embargo. This was demanded by the governments of Great Britain and France when the embargo came into force in 2018. If the training of Saudi border soldiers has resumed, the construction of fences and walls on the border with Yemen should also continue, otherwise the training will not make sense. Whether this will happen is also determined by the war situation on the southern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, Saudi Arabia will continue to do everything it can to destroy the Houthi rebels or to force them out of Yemen. The humanitarian situation in Yemen will continue to worsen. Shabia Mantoo, the spokeswoman of the UN refugee agency UNHCR responsible for Yemen, is convinced of this. "Since the beginning of the conflict a total of more than four million people have been forced to flee, many of whom have meanwhile tried to return home...The majority have no choice but to stay in Yemen... Only a comparatively small part, around 65,000 people, have fled to neighboring states or other countries in the Middle East."⁴

The war still largely seals off the border to the north. Nevertheless, refugees from Somalia, Djibouti and Ethiopia are trying to escape to the Arabian Peninsula. Because the refugees cannot leave Yemen, they are already being repatriated by force, often by the same traffickers who brought the people into the country, Shabia Mantoo knows. In addition, there are Yemeni citizens who are prevented from fleeing to the north and therefore try to escape via African countries "According to UNHCR, tens of thousands of Yemenis have fled to Djibouti, Somalia

³Report Mainz (25.20.2018). Bundesregierung hält an Polizeieinsatz in Saudi-Arabien fest. *Report Mainz*. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from <https://www.swr.de/report/presse/bundesregierung-haelt-an-polizeieinsatz-in-saudi-arabien-fest/-/id=1197424/did=22716894/nid=1197424/12tqlte/index.html>

⁴ Reimann Graf, M. (03.2019). "Viele Werden mehrfach Vertrieben". *Amnesty – Magazin der Menschenrechte*. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from <https://www.amnesty.ch/de/ueber-amnesty/publikationen/magazin-amnesty/2019-1/jemen-fluechtlinge-vertriebene-interview-shabia-mantoo-unhcr>

and Ethiopia. They then often live in the same camps as the African refugees who have returned from Yemen⁵" A dramatic situation consisting of reciprocal flight movements that will only get worse once the fence is completed in the south of the Arabian Peninsula as well.

Company Profiles

Airbus S.E.

emerged from EADS (European Aeronautic Defence and Space) in 2013 and is Europe's largest aerospace group. Behind the British company BAE Systems, Airbus is Europe's second largest armaments company and the second largest aerospace company in the world after Boeing. The newly founded Airbus Defence and Space division, headquartered in Taufkirchen near Munich, produces at various locations with European partner companies, among others, the Eurofighter/Typhoon combat aircraft, the Airbus A400M transport aircraft, the Airbus 330MRT tanker, as well as satellites and orbital systems, guided missiles, defence and security systems and communications technology.

A separate division within the Airbus Group was until recently Airbus Helicopters. The company produced a variety of helicopter models for civil and military use. Worldwide, the Group's products had a market share of 30 percent of the total worldwide helicopter fleet.

At the turn of the year 2018/19, Airbus S.E. employed almost 1354,000 people at around 70 locations in Europe and 35 field offices worldwide⁶. The annual turnover amounts to 63.71 billion Euro (as of 2018). Airbus shares are listed in the MDAX and EURO STOXX 50 share indices⁷.

Rheinmetall Defence

is part of the Düsseldorf-based Rheinmetall Group, a listed German defence technology group and automotive supplier. In 2018, the company generated sales of €5,602 billion with 20,676 employees worldwide. The Defence sector comprises three divisions: Weapons and Ammunition, Electronic Solutions (including the Border Guard division) and Vehicle Systems.

In 2018, the Defence sector's sales amounted to EUR 3221 million, or around 50% of total sales⁸.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Wikipedia (n.d.a). Airbus. Wikipedia (Online Encyclopedia). Archived from original on September 16th, 2020, available at https://web.archive.org/web/20200916031259/https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Airbus_Group*

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Wikipedia (n.d.b). Rheinmetall. Wikipedia (Online Encyclopedia). Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rheinmetall>*

Rheinmetall builds major weapon systems such as the Leopard II main battle tank, the Puma and Lynx infantry fighting vehicles, field and tank howitzers, the tank gun for the Leopard II as well as automatic cannon for the Tornado and Eurofighter combat aircraft. For the border protection sector, the company has developed the Persistent Surveillance System PSS, which is used by the Canadian Army in Afghanistan, among others.

Rheinmetall has subsidiaries in countries such as Italy (RWM Italia), South Africa (Rheinmetall Denel Munition Pty), Canada and Austria (RWM Arges). Arms critics accuse the company of maintaining these branches because military equipment produced in third countries is not subject to German arms export controls⁹.

Hensoldt-Holding GmbH

was formerly part of the Airbus Group and was sold to the American financial investor KKR in 2017. The group of companies with headquarters in Taufkirchen near Munich has further locations in Ulm, Oberkochen, Wetzlar, Immenstaad, Pforzheim and Kiel. Hensoldt's core business is radar and optoelectronic systems, electronic warfare and avionics. Hensoldt's radar systems are used for surveillance, reconnaissance and air defense - on platforms such as the Eurofighter, on German and American warships and as ground-based systems, e.g. in border security installations.

Hensoldt has around 4000 employees and annual sales of around one billion euros. The company is represented at 16 locations worldwide, including India, Thailand, Brazil, South Africa and - particularly interesting for our topic - also in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates (VAR). Both belong - as described - to the war coalition against Yemen¹⁰.

The Federal Republic of Germany allegedly holds a minority stake in Hensoldt, which is managed by the Federal Ministry of Defense. ¹¹(14) At the end of 2020 Hensoldt wants to join the German stock exchange¹².

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰ *Wikipedia (n.d.c). Hensoldt (Unternehmensgruppe). Wikipedia (Online Encyclopedia). Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hensoldt_\(Unternehmensgruppe\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hensoldt_(Unternehmensgruppe))*

¹¹ Hoffmann, L. (28.02.2017). Bund sichert sich Goldene Aktie an Hensoldt. *Hartpunkt.de (Blog). Retrieved November 07th from <https://www.hartpunkt.de/bund-sichert-sich-offenbar-goldene-aktie-an-hensoldt/>*

¹² DPA (08.09.2020). Radarhersteller Hensoldt will an die Börse. *Süddeutsche Zeitung. Retrieved November 07th, 2020 from <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/ruestungsindustrie-radarhersteller-hensoldt-will-an-die-boerse-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-200908-99-474156>*

Offender Profiles

Dirk Hoke, Chief Executive Officer - Airbus Defence and Space

Dirk Hoke joined Airbus in 2016 from the Siemens Group, where he already held a number of management positions - including in Africa, the USA and China. Before joining Siemens, he was a development engineer at Renault in Paris. At the Airbus Group he is a member of the Airbus Executive Committee and the Defence & Space Executive Committee.

Hoke expressly regretted the delivery stop to Saudi Arabia and VAR with regard to the armaments cooperation with France. He told SPIEGEL: "The French would consider it an affront if they were no longer allowed to supply markets such as the Gulf region because of a German veto"¹³.

Armin Papperger - Chief Executive Officer Rheinmetall AG

Armin Papperger (born 1963), has been CEO of Rheinmetall AG since January 1, 2013. At the same time, he is - according to the company - responsible for the Defence sector as CEO. After completing his studies, the engineer began his professional career in 1990 in quality management in the Defence sector of the Rheinmetall Group. After holding a number of further positions in this field, he was Managing Director of various subsidiaries in the Defence sector from 2001 onwards. In July 2007 he was appointed head of the Weapon and Munitions division. At the beginning of 2010, Papperger took over responsibility for the Vehicle Systems and Weapon and Munitions divisions within the Defence division¹⁴.

Papperger repeatedly criticized the Federal Republic's restrictive laws on arms exports and called for their softening. As late as September 2019, he praised the Australian government, with whom he had experienced an appreciation during his visit in June 2019, which he was regularly denied at home. "They don't even shake hands with us here because they say: 'that's defense industry - that's dangerous'," he complained in an interview with the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and spoke of a "public smear campaign" against his industry.¹⁵

¹³ Gebauer, M. & Traufetter, G. (04.10.2019). Airbus-Rüstungschef wirbt für Waffenexporte nach Saudi-Arabien. *Spiegel Online*. Retrieved November 07th, 2020 from <https://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/airbus-defence-chef-wirbt-fuer-waffenexporte-nach-saudi-arabien-a-1289961.html>

¹⁴ Rheinmetall Group (n.d.). Executive Board. *Rheinmetall.com [Company Website]*. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from https://www.rheinmetall.com/en/rheinmetall_ag/group/gremien/executive_board/index.php

¹⁵ Jansen, J. & Scharrenbroch, C. (19.09.2020). „Hier gibt man uns nichtmal die Hand“. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Net*. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from

Thomas Müller - CEO of Hensoldt-Holding GmbH

Thomas Müller has been managing the company since its split from the Airbus Group in February 2017. Before that, Müller held various management positions in the defense and aerospace sector of Airbus. Müller is also a board member of the Federal Association of the German Security and Defence Industry (BDSV)¹⁶.

<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/rheinmetall-chef-armin-papperger-im-gespraech-ueber-erkennung-16391293.html>

¹⁶RPM (25.11.2018). Hensoldt-Chef Thomas Müller jetzt im Vorstand des BDSV. *Bundeswehr-journal*. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from <http://www.bundeswehr-journal.de/2018/hensoldt-chef-thomas-mueller-jetzt-im-vorstand-des-bdsv/>

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