

# LV= profits from the arms trade

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An anti-arms-trade campaign in Nottingham has discovered that Bournemouth-based company LV= is knowingly profiting from the arms trade. LV=, formerly known as Liverpool Victoria, is a financial services company that sells insurance, savings and investments. Nottingham-based campaign Shut Down H&K discovered that LV= is the landlord of none other than Heckler & Koch - the world's second-largest manufacturer of small arms.



Describing itself as "the world's premier small arms system company", Heckler & Koch makes assault rifles, submachine guns and pistols. Their weapons are used around the world, and have been responsible for an estimated 1.5 million deaths. H&K weapons have armed repressive regimes in Burma and Indonesia, and been trafficked into warzones in Bosnia and Darfur. The company's recent customers include Georgia, Thailand, Lebanon, and the notorious private military company Blackwater.

All of this seems shockingly incompatible with LV='s friendly, caring image. The so-called "friendly society" has a Corporate Social Responsibility programme that aims to raise awareness of "everyday safety and good citizenship," and its website proudly proclaims that "Our focus is on doing the right thing". However, it turns out that LV= owns a small business park on an industrial estate in Nottingham, on which is an unmarked warehouse that serves as H&K's UK office; responsible for international sales and customer service to non-NATO countries.



*Kopassus, the notorious Indonesian stormtroopers, marching with H&K weapons*

When the campaigners learned of this, they wrote to LV=, explaining the nature of H&K's business, and asking LV= to consider not renewing the arms company's lease, or at least making a statement condemning the arms trade. LV= replied unequivocally. Not only are they "pleased to have invested," they have "no wish to disinvest" in Heckler & Koch and they are not prepared to make any statement that may be seen as "victimising" a business. They also rebuffed the campaigners' offer to meet with them.

This position is shockingly hypocritical: In order to avoid "victimising" Heckler & Koch with harsh words, LV= is prepared to turn a blind eye to the Janjaweed "victimising" Darfuri villages, Indonesian armed forces "victimising" Papuans, and the Georgian army "victimising" South Ossetian civilians, to name just three of the many armed conflicts around the world in which human-rights-abusing aggressors have been armed with Heckler & Koch guns.

The Shut Down H&K campaign is now calling for a national public boycott of LV=, with the aim of securing from the company a commitment to disinvest from the arms industry.

## Notes for editors:



**Shut Down H&K** was set up in 2008 by Nottingham residents who were outraged to discover the presence of a major arms company in the city. The campaign has been holding monthly demonstrations at Heckler & Koch's premises. For more information, visit [www.shutdownhk.org.uk](http://www.shutdownhk.org.uk).