

New Business

NB 1. Resolution on Weapons Transfer

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” (Matthew 5:44b-45).

Called to follow the teachings of Jesus, the Church of the Brethren has consistently been opposed to all forms of warmaking. Given the current state of US weapon production and transfers, the church should examine and respond to the impacts of the arms industry.

THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE US ARMS TRADE

The United States is currently the world’s largest exporter of weapons, with 39 percent of global weapons imports in 2023 coming from the US. The US is exporting arms to multiple countries that are actively engaged in military conflicts but also numerous allies that are not actively at war. The US is the largest supplier of military weaponry to Israel, for example, and in recent years US weapons have been used by the Israeli military in attacks that have killed countless civilians in Gaza and southern Lebanon. US military aid to Ukraine has included types of weapons that are banned by international treaties, such as cluster munitions and landmines. The United States is the top supplier of arms to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ukraine, Japan, Australia, South Korea, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, and many other countries. This data is specifically from 2023, as reported by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Arm transfer decisions made now will cause harm for years to come. In the US, the process of weapons transfers—from notification of an arms sale to Congress to delivery to another nation—can take multiple years. Once weapons are manufactured and delivered, that act cannot be undone, and weapons may last for years beyond that date. Weapons that originate in the US end up in unintended places around the world, such as Haiti in recent years, where there are 22 Church of the Brethren congregations. Weapons transfers approved today will have lasting impacts on current and future conflicts and church members around the world.

Concerns about US arms transfers to other countries cannot be disentangled from the private defense industry in the US and how profit is made from war. The top five arms-producing companies in the world are US companies. Increased geopolitical tensions increase global defense spending, allowing businesses to profit directly from instability and violence. For example, tensions between the US and China lead to arguments for greater defense spending within the US. The US also supplies weapons to partners in the Indo-Pacific, including Taiwan and Japan. The direct connection between geopolitical tensions,

military escalation, and profit-making for US-based companies raises ethical concerns about the defense industry and the US's key role in it.

THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN'S HISTORIC OPPOSITION TO WAR AND THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY

The Church of the Brethren has a long history of opposition to war and militarization. The church has reiterated its rejection of militarism and has stated that "war or any participation in war is wrong and entirely incompatible with the spirit, example, and teachings of Jesus Christ" (1918 Statement on "War and Nonresistance," 1970 Statement on "War," 1982 Statement on "Reaffirmation of Opposition to War and Conscription for Military Training").

The Church of the Brethren has a history of opposition to the defense industry as well, and the development of weapons more generally—in particular nuclear weapons. The 1982 Annual Conference passed a statement calling for an end to the nuclear arms race, reaffirming that the church has always "understood the biblical message as contrary to the destructive, life denying, realities of war" (1982 Statement on "A Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race"). As the church in 1982 understood that increasing the number of nuclear weapons was a threat to peace, we recognize today that the production and transfer of more arms from the US to other countries around the world contributes to war and human suffering.

In a 2013 resolution, the church spoke against the use of drone warfare, including in areas where the US was not officially at war (2013 "Resolution Against Drone Warfare"). The statement expressed the understanding that violence outside of the context of official war is still violence and found "the efforts of the United States to distance the act of killing from the site of violence to be in direct conflict to the witness of Christ Jesus." Today we understand that just because there is distance between the US and the countries where US weapons are purchased and used, and the decisions about the use of such weapons are not made directly by the US government, the US is still a participant in the violence those weapons cause.

In a 1991 statement on peacemaking, the church encouraged "the boycott of products produced and sold by companies that derive large amounts of their income from military contracts" (1991 Statement on "Peacemaking: The Calling of God's People in History") and in 2006, the church decided that Brethren Benefit Trust (now Eder Financial) would divest from Caterpillar because its military-grade bulldozers were used in military actions in Israel and Palestine (2006 Statement on "Divestment from Companies Selling Products Used as Weapons in Israel and Palestine"). Eder Financial has a long history of providing and following investment guidelines based on Annual Conference statements, including screening out weapons manufacturers and companies with defense contracts.

1 These Church of the Brethren statements show that even indirect actions con-
2 tributing to violence are contrary to our understanding of God's intentions for
3 humanity and our world, as well as being contrary to our call as disciples of
4 Jesus Christ.

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6 **THE CHURCH STATES ITS OPPOSITION TO US**
7 **ARMS TRANSFERS IN DISCIPLESHIP TO JESUS CHRIST**

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9 In the current moment, it is important, again, to affirm the Church of the
10 Brethren's commitment to peace as God's will and the call of Christ, and in that
11 context to recognize the transfer of US weapons as a form of participation in
12 war. The Church of the Brethren states its opposition to the US manufacturing
13 and sale of weapons and urges the US government to halt the sale of arms to
14 other countries.

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16 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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18 **At the individual level:**

- 19 1. That individuals educate themselves and others about the impacts of the US
20 arms trade and our biblical call to peacemaking.
- 21 2. That individuals reflect and pray about the effects of US weapons transfers
22 around the world, and how best to move society and government down a
23 less militaristic path.
- 24 3. That individuals who own investments, including retirement accounts and
25 pensions, divest from the arms industry. Annually, Eder Financial compiles
26 lists of the top twenty-five publicly traded defense contractors and all pub-
27 licly traded companies where more than ten percent of their revenue comes
28 from contracts with the US Department of Defense. Following these guide-
29 lines, individuals should divest from companies that have more than a min-
30 imal involvement in weapons production whether or not they derive the
31 majority of their profit through military contracts.
- 32 4. That individuals contact their elected representatives and participate in non-
33 violent direct action to oppose US weapons transfers.

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35 **At the congregational and district levels:**

- 36 1. That congregational and district leadership provide resources and encour-
37 agement for church members to learn about, reflect on, and take action on
38 the concern of US arms transfers.
- 39 2. That congregations and districts divest from companies that have more than
40 a minimum involvement in weapons production, including those that de-
41 rive the majority of their profit not through military contracts.

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43 **At the denominational level:**

- 44 1. That the Church of the Brethren, through the Office of Peacebuilding and
45 Policy, engage in ongoing research, education, and advocacy against US
46 arms transfers and the defense industry.

2. That Annual Conference agencies and other Church of the Brethren-related organizations divest from companies that have more than a minimal involvement in weapons production, including those that derive the majority of their profit not through military contracts, referring to the lists compiled from Eder Financial.

NOTES

Statements and Actions of the Church of the Brethren:

- Paper Adopted by the Goshen Conference, 1918, www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1918-statement-on-war-and-nonresistance/
- Statement on War, 1970, www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1970-war/
- Resolution, "Reaffirmation of Opposition to War and Conscription for Military Training," 1982, www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1982-opposition-to-war-and-conscription/
- Statement, "A Call to Halt the Nuclear Arms Race," 1982, www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1982-nuclear-arms-race/
- "Resolution Against Drone Warfare," 2013, www.brethren.org/ac/statements/2013-resolution-again-drone-warfare/
- Statement, "Peacemaking, The Calling of God's People in History," 1991, www.brethren.org/ac/statements/1991-peacemaking/
- Resolution, "Divestment from Companies Selling Products Used as Weapons in Israel and Palestine," 2006

Other Sources:

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Arms Transfers Database, Updated 3/11/2024, www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers
- Council for Foreign Relations, "US Aid to Israel in Four Charts," 11/13/2024, www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts
- Amnesty International USA Submission to NSM-20, "Unlawful Use of US-Made Munitions and Violations of International Law by Israel Since January 2023," 4/29/2024, www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/4.29.2024-NSM-20-AIUSA-submission-re-Israel.pdf
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2023," 03/2024, www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/fs_2403_at_2023.pdf
- United States Government Accountability Office, Report to Congressional Requesters, "Caribbean Firearms: Agencies Have Anti-Trafficking Efforts in Place, But State Could Better Assess Activities," 10/15/2024, www.gao.gov/products/gao-25-107007
- Church of the Brethren, Global Mission, www.brethren.org/global
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "The SIPRI Top 100 Arms-producing and Military Services Companies in the World, 2023," Updated 12/24, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2024/sipri-fact-sheets/sipri-top-100-arms-producing-and-military-services-companies-2023>

- 1 • Sing, S., "Why the Defense Industry Outlook Is So Strong," Forbes,
2 3/13/2024, [www.forbes.com/sites/sarwantsingh/2024/03/11/why-the-de-](http://www.forbes.com/sites/sarwantsingh/2024/03/11/why-the-defense-industry-outlook-is-so-strong/)
3 [fense-industry-outlook-is-so-strong/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/sarwantsingh/2024/03/11/why-the-defense-industry-outlook-is-so-strong/)
- 4 • Congressional Research Service, "Taiwan: Defense and Military Issues,"
5 8/15/2024, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12481>
- 6 • Eder Financial, "Eder Values Investing," <https://ederfinancial.org/EVI>
- 7 • Eder Financial, "US Department of Defense 2024 Top 25 Publicly Traded
8 Companies Receiving Prime DoD Contracts,"
9 https://ederfinancial.org/files/galleries/DoD_Lists_2024_Top_25.pdf
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11 Due to Greater than 10 Percent of Gross Revenues from Prime Contracts
12 with the U.S. DoD,"
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15 **Action of the Mission and Ministry Board:** *The Mission and Ministry Board at its*
16 *meeting on Saturday, March 8, 2025, had consensus and adopted the Resolution on*
17 *Weapons Transfers and recommends it to the 2026 Annual Conference for adoption.*

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