

Opinion polls clearly demonstrate that a majority of citizens – including those of Nuclear Weapon States – also overwhelmingly want a nuclear-weapon-free future. So now is the time to deliver it.

## Action

Ask your MP to sign Early Day Motion 72 calling on the government “*to work to achieve progress on multilateral negotiations with the aim of achieving implementation of a nuclear weapons convention by 2020*”. To find your MP, go to [www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)

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## References

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## Metrix Consortium members

### Training partners

QinetiQ  
AgustaWestland  
City & Guilds  
EDS  
Nord Anglia Education  
Raytheon  
Serco  
The Open University

### Estate partners

Land Securities Trillium  
Currie & Brown  
Dalkia  
Laing O'Rourke  
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## The St Athan Defence Training Academy: the future of British education?

**Stuart Tannock discusses the disturbing implications of the Ministry of Defence's new multi-billion pound training academy.**

Britain's largest education and technology investment project in recent memory has been developing quietly under the public's radar. It is time we paid attention. In January 2007, the Ministry of Defence awarded an £11 billion contract to the private Metrix Consortium (see Box) to build a massive new training centre for the British armed forces at the village of St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan, South Wales.

St Athan, which is expected to become one of the world's biggest military training establishments when it opens in 2013, will provide specialist training in engineering, communications and information systems technology to all three services of the British military. For the first time, it will centralise in one location military training that is currently done in sites across the country.

Supporters of St Athan emphasise that the Academy will use state-of-the-art technology and training methods such as neurolinguistic programming, e-learning technologies, computer-based training, computer-aided instruction, emulation, simulation and web-based systems. St Athan, they claim, “*breathes life into the classroom of the future model which for many years now has been anticipated by futurologists and thought leaders in the education community*.” St Athan represents a “*model for training in this country*” that will enable Britain to realise Lord Leitch's vision of gaining “*world leadership in skills*.”<sup>1</sup>

Why should any of this worry us? There is the fundamental question of why we should support such a massive outlay of taxpayer money on a military that is still involved in fighting an illegal war in Iraq – and in a country, Britain, that already boasts the world's second-largest military budget. Beyond this, St Athan represents three developments that should be attracting extended public and political debate, but that instead have received little attention, beyond a small, local campaign against the Academy that sprung up in Wales after the project was first announced.

First, St Athan is part of a political project of privatising the British armed forces, and turns over responsibility for military training to a private, for-profit consortium. At a time when, across the Atlantic, US Congress is holding investigations into abuses perpetrated by private military companies such as Blackwater in Iraq, Britain is rushing headlong down the same path of military privatisation that the USA has gone down before. This privatisation, moreover, makes the British government a direct partner of one of the world's largest and most controversial arms dealers, Raytheon, which is a core member of the St Athan Metrix Consortium.

Second, St Athan represents a major leap forward in Britain's participation in the global arms trade. The Metrix business model for maximising profits at St Athan is to maximise the amount of training it provides, through serving not just the British military but militaries from around the world. Between 2002 and 2005, the Ministry of Defence provided military training to more than 12,000 personnel from 137 countries, many with poor human rights records.<sup>2</sup> With St Athan, this trade promises only to increase.

Third, St Athan represents another step up in the ongoing militarisation of British education. The Open University – whose Vice-Chancellor, Brenda Gourley, claims that universities should be “*beacons that reflect the very best of which the human spirit is capable*”<sup>3</sup> – is a direct partner in the Metrix Consortium. Schools around the Vale of Glamorgan are making plans to train local youth for jobs at the St Athan Academy, while colleges and universities across South Wales, which have already been extensively militarised over the past decade, are exploring new Academy contract tie-ins.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, one reason why we shouldn't expect Cardiff University, the premier institution of research and learning in the region, to lead any critical investigation into the St Athan project is that, in 2005, it signed a long-term strategic research partnership with QinetiQ, another core member of the Metrix Consortium.

Promoters of the St Athan Defence Training Academy claim that it represents the future of education in Britain. Without public investigation, debate and critique of St Athan and other military research and education projects across the country, there is a strong possibility that this will come true. If it does, it will not be for the better of Britain or anywhere else in the world.

## Action

To find out more about the issue or to join the Stop the St Athan Academy campaign, see [www.cynefinywerin.org.uk](http://www.cynefinywerin.org.uk) or [www.no2militaryacademy.com](http://www.no2militaryacademy.com)

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