The Dirty Dozen
Alliant Techsystems

CEO: Dan Murphy
Total 2006 Sales: $3.1 billion
Campaign Contributions 2002-2006: $175,360
Headquarters: Edina, MN
Website: http://www.atk.com/

Overview

The “Long War” needs lots of bullets. With the U.S. fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and training new soldiers every day, Alliant’s bullets and munitions-- manufactured in Independence, Missouri and other sites throughout the country—are literally flying off the shelves. The company has more than quadrupled its capacity to manufacture small arms ammunition since 2000, and is now planning to increase capacity to be able to produce 1.5 billion bullets a year. Industry watchers say that demand for ammunition is the highest since the Vietnam War. As Dan Murphy, Alliant’s CEO said recently, “the consumable nature of our core product and our future oriented portfolios of advanced weapons and space systems align ATK closely with future funding priorities.” Plainly said, war and preparation for war are the foundation of our profit and the future looks bright for the country’s biggest bullet maker.

The company, based in Edina, Minnesota, is the U.S. military’s largest supplier of munitions-- from bullets in guns to heavy artillery and cluster munitions shot from tanks-- and works on many Pentagon contracts, including composite materials for space warfare systems and rocket motors for most missiles—most notably the Trident II missile and the Minuteman III ICBM, both of which are nuclear delivery vehicles. The company has also moved into the lucrative Homeland Security arena, marketing detention systems for chemical agents and radiation to police and military alike. Finally, Alliant’s foot is in the proverbial “future war” door, creating prototype weapons using “directed energy” (ie. lasers and microwaves) for both “lethal and non lethal purposes.”

This breadth- from simple bullets to space-age plastics- has contributed to Alliant Techsystems catapulting from the bottom of the Pentagon’s list of top 100 contractors to the top third. The company, which only employs 15,000 people, is ranked 29th for 2005. For fiscal years 2002 through 2005, the most recent years for which full data is available, Alliant Techsystems received a cumulative total of about $3.7 billion in Pentagon contracts.
YEAR DOD CONTRACTS (millions)
2002 $674 million
2003 $813 million
2004 $1.02 billion
2005 $1.27 billion

The company has a checkered past that it would rather ignore. Vietnam War era protests made its predecessor Honeywell synonymous with landmines, cluster bombs and indiscriminate killing in Southeast Asia. Honeywell unloaded its munitions operations in 1991 and renamed it Alliant. But, as we will see later, the protests continue. Alliant’s $3.1 billion a year business operates in 23 states and has international sales office in 33 countries, including Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Malaysia, Chile, Pakistan, India, Greece and Turkey. More than two-thirds of the company’s business comes from the Defense Department and related military and Homeland Security agencies, with $1.27 billion in Pentagon contracts in 2005.

Alliant Techsystems is responsible for some of the deadliest and most problematic weapons systems in the United States (and global) arsenals.

Cluster Bombs
According to a 1997 Human Rights Watch report, Alliant Techsystems was the primary contractor on two antipersonnel mine contracts—the Volcano and the Gator mine systems. The “Vehicle Launched Scatterable Antitank System (VLSAS)” or Volcano has launcher tubes that can fire 800 antitank mines and 160 antipersonnel explosives in just 43 seconds when mounted on a tank or truck. When mounted in a Blackhawk helicopter, Volcano can do the job in 17 seconds. Launched from either platform, the mines cover an area about 11 football fields long and about one field wide.

In response to letters from Human Rights Watch, then-CEO Richard Schwartz said the company reconfigured the Volcano landmine system to an antitank capacity, updating it from the mix of antitank and antipersonnel mines, at the request of the Pentagon. Alliant’s Volcano system is still being manufactured and marketed, with emphasis on its “completely reliable self-destructing antitank munitions.”

The Gator system is dispensed by jet aircraft. An F-16 fighter plane or similar craft can spread 600 mines in seconds—deploying 72 antitank mines and 22 antipersonnel weapons from each of its cluster bomb-like containers. Production of the Gator system was completed in late 1996.

Depleted Uranium Shells
Alliant manufactured over 16 million medium and large caliber depleted uranium munitions. The suburban Minneapolis site where Alliant made DU munitions is now a “superfund site” and the local community is fighting the company and the Pentagon over clean-up responsibilities.

In Iraq, U.S. troops fire DU weaponry from the Abrams battle tank, A-10 Warthog and other systems. A toxic and radioactive substance, DU— otherwise known as Uranium 238— is a byproduct of enriched uranium, the fissile material in nuclear weapons. It is pyrophoric and burns spontaneously on impact. That, along with its extreme density, makes DU munitions the Pentagon’s ideal choice for penetrating enemy tank armor or reinforced bunkers.

When a DU shell hits its target, it burns, losing anywhere from 40 percent to 70 percent of its mass and dispersing a fine toxic radioactive dust that can be carried long distances by winds or absorbed into the soil and groundwater. According to a military spokesman, in the first year of the war in
Iraq, the U.S. Army and Air Force fired 127 tons of DU munitions. Soldiers and civilians in the war zones and those who live near testing ranges like the one in Socorro, New Mexico where open air testing of DU was conducted for more than 20 years, have suffered the short and long term health effects of ingesting radioactive dust, such as kidney problems, birth defects, cancers and death.

**Nuclear Weapons**

In partnership with Lockheed Martin, the company is developing a submarine-launched, intermediate-range ballistic missile (SLIRBM) — a “supersonic, GPS-guided, long-range strike missile.”

Alliant Tech makes the propulsion system for the Trident II (D5) submarine-launched ballistic missile, a multiple warhead, nuclear armed missile. The D5 is one of the few major long-range nuclear delivery vehicles still being produced for U.S. forces. The missiles are designed to be launched from Trident ballistic missile firing tubes aboard four U.S Navy Ohio-class submarines that are being converted to guided-missile submarines.

As part of the START II agreement, older C4 missiles are being dismantled and replaced by fewer but faster D5 missiles. This represents a huge windfall for Alliant Tech and lead contractor Lockheed Martin, but is completely unnecessary. According to Rep. Bill Luther (D-MN), the D5 is a “cold war weapon specifically designed to destroy hardened missile silos and other military targets found in the former Soviet Union.” The Congressional Budget Office estimates that ending procurement of the D5 missile would save taxpayers $262 million the first year, and as much as $2.6 billion over the next seven years.

**AlliantAction**

Bullets for war, propulsion for nuclear weapons, depleted uranium, cluster bombs... none of Alliant's crimes go unchallenged. For the last nine years, the Twin Cities peace and justice communities have vigiled at Alliant Techsystems, drawing attention to what happens behind corporate facades and inside guarded complexes, and channeling outrage at the war and war profiteering into resistance and campaigning.

According to a January article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune, the company has arrested 176 people for trespassing at protests in the last nine years. In jury trials in 2003 and 2004, activists effectively put the war in Iraq, President Bush’s policies and Alliant's war profiteering on trial, winning acquittals. According to Alliant campaigner Steve Clemens, currently serving six months in jail for an action at the School of the Americas, the company and Edina officials were embarrassed. “The city, Alliant Techsystems, and the city attorneys got together to devise a different strategy to prosecute nonviolent activist... rewrite[ing] the local law to include a new trespass ordinance which would deny protestors the right to put their case before a jury of their peers... The City of Edina was in such a hurry to protect this corporate malefactor (ATK) that members of the City Council adopted the new ordinance without even having the courtesy to allow for community input by scheduling a second reading of the proposed ordinance.”

In October, hosted by AlliantAction, groups and individuals from around the country will gather in the Twin Cities to network, strategize and share stories in the work against war profiteers.

*This research and report was compiled by Frida Berrigan of the Arms Trade Resource Center of the World Policy Institute in January 2007 for the War Resisters League’s WIN Magazine.*