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

by Wolfgang Landgraeber

translation from German by Ruth Rohde

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(Short 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. Companies such as Airbus profit doubly: they supply high-tech weapons for billions to the war coalition partners Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (VAR) and other Arab states, which have been waging war against the Iranian-backed Huthi rebels since 2004, and they make billions more by setting up border protection facilities with the aim, among other things, of preventing people affected by the war from fleeing, including to Europe. Much of what is written about border surveillance technology in the Airbus brochures are developed and produced in Germany: e.g. in Immenstaad on Lake Constance with 2,250 employees. According to Airbus, this is where "command, reconnaissance and surveillance systems" as well as "target display drones for civilian and military customers" and "platform manufacturers for helicopters, combat aircraft, transport aircraft, and UAVs" (=unmanned aircraft=drones, i.e.) are developed and built¹. The humanitarian situation in Yemen will continue to deteriorate. Shabia Mantoo, the spokeswoman of the UN refugee agency UNHCR responsible for Yemen, is convinced of this. "Since the beginning of the conflict, more than four million people have been forced to flee their homes, many of whom have tried to return home...The majority have no choice but to stay in Yemen. Only a comparatively small number, around 65,000 people, have fled to neighboring states or other countries in the Middle East²". The war still largely seals off the border to the north. Once it is over, the high-tech fence and the sea surveillance systems of Airbus will prevent escape. At the same time, refugees are streaming in from Somalia, Djibouti, and Ethiopia trying to escape from Yemen to the Arabian Peninsula, which the fence then prevents. Already now, violent repatriations are taking place, often conducted by the same traffickers who brought the people into the country, Shabia Mantoo knows, "According to UNHCR, tens of thousands of Yemenis have fled to Djibouti, Somalia, and Ethiopia. They then often live in the same camps as the African refugees who returned from Yemen."³

¹ Bodensee AIRea (n.d.). Airbus Defence and Space. *Bodensee AIRea* [Website]. Retrieved November 7th, 2020 from <http://www.bodensee-airrea.de/pages/deutsch/unternehmen/airbus-defence-and-space-gmbh.php>

²Reimann 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> (Quote translated from German)

³ Ibid. (Quote translated from German)

Contact

For the whole text Case No. 06.1:

Wolfgang Landgraeber
Dantestr. 27 (Büro), 80637 München
Tel.: 0049-(0)89-17 87 78-02
Fax: 0049-(0)89-17 87 78-03
Mob.: 0049-(0)173-75 40 613
E-Mail: w.landgraeber@t-online.de
Web: www.landgraeberfilm.de

Coordination of Case 06.1 of GN-STAT

ArmsInformationCentre / RüstungsInformationsBüro (RIB e.V.)
Stühlingerstraße 7, 79106 Freiburg, Germany
Tel.: 0049-(0)761-76 78 088,
Fax: 0049-(0)761-76 78 090
Web: www.rib-ev.de

Jürgen Grässlin
Tel.: 0049-(0)761-76 78 208
Mob.: 0049-(0)170-611 37 59
E-Mail: jg@rib-ev.de

Stephan Möhrle
Mob.: 0049-(0)1522-26 36 531
E-Mail: moehrle@rib-ev.de