

## Paul Holtom (1997-2003)



I arrived at CREES in the autumn of 1997 and left at the beginning of 2003 with an MA and a PhD in Russian and East European Studies. I am currently director of the arms transfers programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

It seems that like many of the late 1990s CREES cohort I owe a great debt to the Centre. CREES provided a stimulating environment for study and I am amazed at how much of Mike Berry's Russian for Social Scientists course stuck with me - I continue to use Mike's 'little blue book' when reviewing Russian language materials today for news and analysis of Russian arms exports and the arms industry.

I have very fond memories of the times spent with fellow CREESniki in the Baykov library, the 'airport lounge' at Pritchards Road and, of course, staff bar. The support provided by a very special group of students and staff – in particular Marea and Tricia! – helped me get through my PhD and I have not yet found a workplace that comes close to replicating the atmosphere of CREES. In addition, the CREES conference taught me an invaluable life lesson - never drink Ukrainian honey and pepper vodka.