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PAC pressed over buried BAE report

By Karl West

THE Public Accounts Committee is under pressure to formally request the release of a buried National Audit Office report on BAE Systems.

It follows last week's decision by NAO chief John Bourn to step down.

He had previously resisted releasing the 1992 document on the controversial £43bn Al Yamamah arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

It remains the only NAO report never to be published.

Dr John Pugh, Liberal Democrat MP and member of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which polices the work of the NAO, believes Bourn's departure provides an opportunity to exhume the report.

He added: 'This document is in limbo. Pretty soon we will be in the strange position where the only people to have read it will all be dead.'

BAE (down 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ p at 494 $\frac{1}{4}$ p) has always denied claims it bribed Saudi officials to win lucrative defence contracts.

Bourn is stepping down as auditor general following a row over his extravagant expenses, plus revelations in the Daily Mail about his cosy relationship with Britain's defence industry, including BAE, with whom he attended the British Grand Prix.

Daily Mail
2 NOV 07