

This meeting was attended by Nigel Day, Oxford CND and Peter Gloyns, Salisbury CND, both representing Southern Region of CND in the Council. These notes are prepared by us to pass on some of the information put across during the meeting.

Kate Hudson, the General Secretary of CND, gave a summary of the campaigning issues in which we are involved.

RAF Lakenheath

There has been a big increase in media interest in the developments there. The term “Surety Dormitory” used in the description of future building plans proves that nuclear weapons are due to be housed there. CND is considering the possibility of a legal challenge on the planning front, on the grounds that no environmental impact report has been submitted. CND has formally asked if such a report exists and when they get a reply, they will decide on future action. Further support for the theory that preparations for nuclear weapon storage are being made comes in the form of the recent visit by the deputy US Defence Secretary, Kathleen Hicks, to the base.

Russia views these developments as an escalation. 59% of UK population do not want weapons there, according to a recent survey.

TPNW Second Meeting of Parties

Tom Unterrainer has attended these on behalf of CND. There was discussion of the Environmental remuneration aspect, which the UK government opposes. We may see the establishment of an International Trust Fund. There are plans to raise arguments against the theory of Nuclear Deterrence.

Trident

There was mention of the recent incident where a Vanguard Class submarine’s depth gauge malfunctioned and led to the submarine approaching the so called “crush level”. This occurred on a nuclear armed submarine.

HMS Victorious has had an onboard fire. Suppliers to the Royal Navy have been judged unsatisfactory in a recent report. One submarine has recently been on tour for 6 months, rather than the planned 2 months, due to the shortage of serviceable vessels.

Ukraine

In October, NATO conducted a nuclear exercise in southern Europe. This was condemned as provocative by Russia. Russia has revoked its ratification of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. It now is in the same position as the US, having signed the Treaty, but not ratified it. It would be disastrous if nuclear testing was resumed.

The war in Ukraine is a stalemate. The media has lost interest. Russia is planning to recruit more soldiers in a climate in which public opinion within Russia is turning against the war. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy believes the West is losing interest. The West is talking about extending sanctions and placing its emphasis on preventing further Russian invasions.

Gaza

The Financial Times reported today that Israel is digging in for a year long war in Gaza. A ground offensive into southern Gaza is taking place and there are 2 million refugees from the north in this region. The border crossing at Rafah is now the target of military action from Israel. The Wall Street Journal reported today that the US is sending “bunker busting” bombs to Israel. This is not compatible with the US stated position that they want to limit civilian casualties.

Regional escalation of this conflict risks both nuclear weapon use by Israel and increasing pressure for proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region.

On top of all this, the population of Gaza is at risk of a major public health crisis.

COP28

The UAE is taking the opportunity to pitch oil and gas deals to foreign governments. Let's hope this is not the main outcome!

Financial situation

CND continues to face a serious financial problem in which expenditure regularly exceeds income. Legacy funds are being used to balance the books, but something has to change, as this is not a stable solution.

The meeting covers a whole range of detailed issues in addition to those described above, with valuable contributions from many Council members. This note is kept short in the interests of readability!