



OXFORD CND

NEWSLETTER

March / April 2024



**3% of U.S.
military
spending
could end
starvation
on earth**

worldbeyondwar.org

Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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Trident missile test failure

HMS VANGUARD IS ONE of four Vanguard-class nuclear submarines that first went on patrol in 1994, with one of the vessels continually at sea.

Each Vanguard-class submarine can hold up to 16 intercontinental ballistic missiles and will carry up to eight Trident rockets and up to 40 nuclear warheads, each capable of carrying a 100-kiloton bomb, over six times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. A Trident missile can be fired at targets up to 4,000 miles away and at its fastest can travel at more than 13,000mph.

A Trident nuclear missile failed, plopping into the Atlantic during a test launch attended by the British defence secretary in January, raising questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of Britain's nuclear deterrent. The incident was "event specific", implying it would not have happened in the unlikely event of a war. The MOD said that an "anomaly occurred" in what was the final exercise for Vanguard and its crew after a refit of the vessel that took more than seven years.

Tobias Ellwood, the former chair of the defence select committee, said that the problems related to testing gear. "I understand it was some equipment that was actually attached to the missile itself that prevented the firing of the rocket system after the missile had left the submarine,"

Nuclear firing systems are complex and rarely tested and failures common, but it is the second time in a row a Trident missile try-out has gone wrong. In 2016, a missile that had been fired had to be destroyed after going off course. Instead of heading towards Africa it ended up veering towards the US.

The MoD had not intended to release a statement about the failure, although there was speculation among experts why a scheduled

test expected around the end of January did not appear to have taken place. It had been intended for the missile to fly about 6,000km into the middle of the Atlantic between Africa and Brazil, according to warnings issued to mariners.

It was prompted to go public after a report in the Sun. According to an anonymous source quoted by the newspaper, the missile simply splashed into the ocean: "It left the submarine but it just went plop, right next to them."

Labour called for assurances over the effectiveness of Britain's nuclear deterrent. The shadow defence secretary, John Healey, said: "Reports of a Trident test failure are concerning. The

defence secretary will want to reassure parliament that this test has no impact on the effectiveness of the UK's deterrent operations."

The Sun

reported that a dummy Trident II missile was propelled into the air by compressed gas in its launch tube but that its so-called first-stage boosters did not ignite.

Trident II missiles are also used by US submarines, and are built by Lockheed Martin, using rocket motors from Northrop

Grumman.

David Cullen, an expert with the Nuclear Information Service, a monitoring group, said the latest failure was more significant than 2016 "not only because it's the second in a row, but because the Trident missiles have gone through a life extension programme, so the current stock should be more reliable than it was in 2016".

He added: "The whole point of the hundreds of billions we are spending on the nuclear weapons programme is that it is supposed to work, and be seen to work, at the prime minister's command. Without that assurance, the entire endeavour is a failure in its own terms." ■



Oppose US/UK Mutual Defence Agreement

THE 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP' is a longstanding refrain in British politics, used to justify so much that's bad in UK foreign policy choices.

Much that feeds war can be notched up to the US/UK special relationship, but it goes far beyond providing diplomatic and military cover and assistance to US enterprises. That relationship is also responsible for the development of the UK's nuclear arsenal and its continued possession of these weapons of mass destruction.

The special nuclear relationship is facilitated by the US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA) – the world's most extensive nuclear sharing agreement. Even though it comes up for renewal in parliament every ten years, few seem to know of its existence.

Neither do many know the extent to which it makes us dependent on the US – or indeed that it underpins the wider relationship between the US and UK. Its full name is the "Agreement between the UK and the USA for cooperation in the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes". The agreement initially enabled both countries to exchange classified information to develop their respective nuclear weapon systems.

But at the start, the MDA prohibited the transfer of nuclear weapons. However, an amendment in 1959 allowed for the transfer of nuclear materials and equipment between both countries up to a certain deadline.

This amendment is extended through a renewal of the treaty every ten years, most recently in 2014 without any parliamentary debate or vote.

The British public and parliamentarians initially found out about that extension and ratification when President Obama informed the US Congress. The next renewal is due in parliament later this year, and we are determined that this time it will not go unchallenged.

Renewing such agreements on the nod, without transparency or accountability is never a good thing. When it ties us so tightly to nuclear cooperation with the White House, at a time of increasing nuclear risk, this is an even greater cause for concern.

Recent US policies have pursued "usable" nukes, for deployment in an increasing range of scenarios, with a bottomless pit of funding available for nuclear modernisation. The time has come to really vigorously oppose this Agreement.

It also puts us at odds with our commitments under the international Non-Proliferation Treaty,

which seeks to stem the spread of nuclear technology.

The relationship and activities which are enshrined by the MDA confirms an indefinite commitment by the US and UK to collaborate on nuclear weapons technology and violates both countries' obligations as signatories to the NPT.

The NPT states that countries should undertake "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to... nuclear disarmament". Rather than working together to get rid of their nuclear weapons, the UK and US are collaborating to further advance their respective nuclear arsenals. Indeed, a 2004 legal advice paper by Rabinder Singh QC and Professor Christine Chinkin concluded that it is "strongly arguable that the renewal of the Mutual Defence Agreement is in breach of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty".

It's just not possible for the UK to have an independent foreign policy, or defence and security policies, if it remains attached at the hip to the US nuclear programme.

The UK government's claim that its submarine-based Trident nuclear weapons system is independent is false. It is technically and politically dependent on the US, largely due to the MDA.

Due to the MDA, the UK relies on the US for many aspects of Trident. The UK's nuclear warhead is a copy of the US one, with some components directly bought from the US.

With the UK's warheads expected to be non-operational by the late 2030s, a decision on their replacement will be intrinsically linked to the work taking place as part of the MDA.

The UK leases from the US the Trident II D5 missiles it uses and British submarines must regularly visit the US base in Kings Bay, Georgia, for the maintenance and replacement of these missiles. By having such direct involvement in Britain's nuclear weapons technology, the US exercises significant leverage over the UK's foreign and defence policy.

Even the most establishment characters must now be able to see that unquestioning allegiance to the US is out of the question.

It's time for the special nuclear relationship to end. CND will be ensuring that the issue is raised vigorously within parliament, and calling on all our supporters to lobby their elected representatives to that effect. ■

Kate Hudson

Path of MADness 2024

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY was held at the former RAF Upper Heyford on Sunday 28th January. This is where nuclear armed US F111 would wait the call to attack the Soviet Union. The Path of MADness has never been walked without an example of a crime against humanity taking place in the present intruding on reflections and meditations on atrocities that have taken place in the past, and feared for the future. However, 2024 felt exceptional given the events in Ukraine, Palestine (the Middle East) and Sudan. We started with a letter written by The Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Patron of the Balfour Project following a pastoral visit to Jerusalem and the West Bank from 14 to 18 January meeting many religious leaders from a variety of denominations. He said: "It was humbling to listen to the great pain being felt in Jewish and Palestinian communities." He ended with the caution that, "... Israel must not become its own worst enemy, but look to negotiate an end to the occupation of the various Palestinian territories on terms that will ensure the flourishing of both Israelis and Palestinians." A letter from Jew living in Tel Aviv was also read out. As theme designated for HMD 2024 is "The fragility of freedom", the impact of crimes against humanity on the exercise of a number of freedoms was addressed: Freedom

of reproduction – eg birth strike arising from an inhospitable world. Freedom of movement – eg mass migration. False freedom eg: 'Arbeit Macht Frei'. Freedom of expression eg: climate change protesters. Freedom to live eg: Palestine, Ukraine and Sudan... in which freedoms can be restricted by perpetrator regimes and environmental collapse. The finding of the ICC on the day before HMD regarding (potentially) genocidal acts being committed in Gaza by the IDF is beyond irony. A survivor of the Shoah inflicted by the Nazis on European Jews had reflected, "How will human beings face up to the evil they are capable of perpetrating? How will they renew their faith in morality while living in a world of which, in Adorno's words 'we cannot be too much afraid', and which contains instruments of destruction that put even the gas chambers in the shade?" This seemed to be more pertinent than ever with the Doomsday clock, set up in 1947, to be standing at 90seconds to oblivion, ie: the threat of nuclear holocaust.

The event concluded with the sound of the Sea Green Singers beseeching 'We've sung a thousand songs of peace' echoing around a Hardened Aircraft Shelter followed by the walk along the NATO runway (the Path of MADness). ■

Daniel Scharf

Exercise Steadfast Defender 2024

IN THE FIRST HALF of 2024, 20,000 service personnel from the Royal Navy, the British Army, and the Royal Air Force with troops, tanks, artillery, jets, attack helicopters, submarines warships and even an aircraft carrier are to deploy around Europe.

The Royal Navy:

- The Royal Navy will be deploying eight warships and submarines, and more than 2,000 sailors.
- A UK Carrier Strike Group, centred on a Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carrier and her air group of F-35B Lightning jets and helicopters, and surrounded by escort frigates and destroyers, will operate as part of a potent naval force of allied warships and submarines in the North Atlantic, the Norwegian Sea and the Baltic Sea.
- More than 400 Royal Marines Commandos will be deployed to the Arctic Circle at the heart of an allied amphibious task group designed to land in the high north and defend the alliance in one of the world's harshest environments.

The British Army:

- 16,000 troops from the British Army will be deployed across eastern Europe from February to June 2024, taking with them tanks, artillery, helicopters, and parachutes.
- There will be live fire manoeuvres, parachute jumps, an Army and Navy joint helicopter force, and Army Special Operations Forces on deployment.
- The British Army will deploy to test and strengthen the readiness of the UK's land forces in defending NATO, and to bolster its ability to operate jointly with allied armed forces.

The Royal Air Force:

- The Royal Air Force will be making use of some of its most cutting-edge aircraft, including F35B Lightning attack aircraft and Poseidon P8 surveillance aircraft.
- The RAF will practice flying in simulated conflict scenarios against near-peer adversaries, proving its ability to deter and defend against threats. ■

Civil nuclear and military defence needs

AFTER 14 YEARS OF TORY mismanagement, the UK finds itself bereft of an energy strategy. This was finally confirmed in the release of the Government's new Nuclear Roadmap. At one level, it's just the same old, same old, the latest in a very long line of PR-driven, more or less fantastical wish-lists for new nuclear in the UK. But at another, it's a total revelation. For years, a small group of dedicated academics and campaigners have suggested that the UK Government's Nuclear Energy Strategy is being driven more by the UK's continuing commitment to an "independent" nuclear weapons capability than by any authoritative energy analysis. For an equal number of years, this was aggressively rebutted by one Energy Minister after another, both Tory and Labour.

The new Nuclear Roadmap dramatically changes all that. It sets to one side any pretence that the links between our civil nuclear programme and our military defence needs were anything other than small-scale – and of no material strategic significance. With quite startling transparency and clarity, the Roadmap not only reveals the full extent of those links, but positively celebrates that co-

dependency as a massive plus in our ambition to achieve a Net Zero economy by 2050. The Roadmap is just a massive diversion from reality. Entailing incalculable opportunity costs. And putting at risk our entire Net Zero by 2050 strategy. Ministers know all that. But they don't really care. Our nuclear weapons programme (including upgrading Trident) will be protected as a consequence of this, via an unceasing flow of public money into the civil nuclear cul-de-sac, at a time when our defence budget is already massively overstretched. So, who cares about the missing 24GW? But will Labour be any different, given its current embrace of the self-same nuclear fantasies in both energy and defence? Depressingly, I rather doubt it. ■

Jonathon Porritt

There will be a webinar by Abingdon Peace Group and Salisbury CND on Tuesday 19th March featuring Professor Andy Stirling – 'Military influences on UK Nuclear Power decisions'. See diary Page 8.

The link for the webinar is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91315134101?pwd=RmxHLzBQaXlHYjFSRm5nREVzYjdSdz09>

Meeting ID: 913 1513 4101 - Passcode: 015836

The climate costs of war and militaries

MORE THAN 5% OF GLOBAL emissions are linked to conflict or militaries but countries continue to hide the true scale.

Russia's war in Ukraine has seen the first attempt to comprehensively document the emissions from any conflict, and researchers have had to develop their methodologies from scratch. Their latest estimate puts the total as equivalent to the annual emissions of a country like Belgium.

Ukraine is not a one-off, with a similar clamour for emissions data around Israel's war against Hamas. While the devastating ongoing conflicts in Sudan or Myanmar are yet to see attention on their emissions, the trend is clear: the carbon cost of conflict needs to be understood, just as the humanitarian, economic or wider environmental costs do.

A proportion of those carbon costs come from military activities. For these, understanding is hampered by the longstanding culture of domestic environmental exceptionalism enjoyed by militaries, and how at the US's insistence, this was translated into UN climate agreements. An exclusion to the 1997 Kyoto protocol became

voluntary reporting under the 2015 Paris agreement.

But when we began to collate and publish the emissions data that militaries report to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), we found that only a handful of countries publish even the bare minimum required by UN reporting guidelines.

The best estimate we have is that militaries are responsible for 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. If the global military were a country, this would place it fourth in terms of its emissions, between India and Russia. At present, we have no military decarbonisation information, while carbon-intensive global military spending has reached record levels.

While some militaries have set vague emissions reduction goals, they are often short on scope and detail, and on accountability. For example, while NATO has drafted a methodology for counting emissions, it does not apply to its members, and it explicitly excludes emissions from NATO-led operations and missions, training and exercises. ■

Drones at Sea

MARITIME DRONES ARE a fraction of the cost of a conventional destroyer or submarine and represent a new vision of naval warfare that exchanges small numbers of high-value military assets for large numbers of cheaper, flexible, and simpler platforms which, working together, have a greater overall capability. In this vision, platforms can be modular, able to carry a number of payloads such as weapons, sensors, or smaller drones depending on the mission, and work as a connected network using artificial intelligence computing methods to stay in touch with other members of the fleet and with human controllers. An adversary would be overwhelmed with a multitude of small targets instead of a few large warships.

Drones can gather information about the ocean more cheaply than larger crewed vessels, and may also be able to reach areas that would be inaccessible for a larger ship. They are not bounded by the physiological limitations of human personnel and can undertake assignments that humans find demanding, such as deep diving or an extended submarine mission. They are also more easily able to loiter undetected than a larger ship, allowing data to be collected over a longer time period, and can also allow potentially dangerous objects to be examined remotely, reducing risks.

Within the world's vast oceans, certain locations are particularly strategically important for both military and civilian purposes. These include the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea, areas around disputed islands in the South and East China Seas, the Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap, the Baltic Sea and the English Channel. These areas often represent choke points and are both crowded with marine traffic and focal points for concentrations of underwater infrastructure. Drone networks are an attractive option for military planners when undertaking surveillance and reconnaissance operations in such areas.

The world's major military powers are all keen to develop drones for use in warfare, recognising the military potential of new technologies, and have all begun research and investment into next-generation weaponry and technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and uncrewed and autonomous systems. China, Russia and the US and its NATO allies have a highly competitive relationship in these fields, and are actively developing such capabilities, including systems for

use in the maritime domain, with Russia lagging somewhat behind China and the US.

Like the larger powers, the UK is keen to exploit the potential of uncrewed and autonomous technology for military purposes. The Royal Navy sees maritime autonomous systems as a major component of its future fleet, operating on and under the sea and in the air on both front-line logistics and support tasks. To date, the UK has used uncrewed technologies to undertake routine tasks such as survey work and dangerous operations such as minesweeping, and in the longer term it has the aims of automating and roboticising many of the roles of its capital ships and equipping them with uncrewed aerial, surface, and undersea vehicles to contribute to a low-cost weaponised sensor network. The systems currently deployed by the UK are still mainly small scale and / or experimental system and the sums of money involved have been relatively modest.

- In general, increasing the militarisation of areas of tension is destabilising and dangerous. If drones are deployed in a zone where there are tensions between nations there is a risk that surveillance, spying, or other missions may escalate tensions.
- There is a perception that drone use is politically less risky than the use of piloted systems, and also that drones have greater surveillance capabilities than crewed aircraft. This may reduce inhibitions about deploying them, risking lowering the threshold for military interventions.
- With no international agreements or codes of practice in place on the acceptable use of drones, the presence of drones in a sensitive region may over time lead to further proliferation in their use and fuel regional arms races.
- Deployment of increasingly autonomous military systems – particularly at sea, where communication is difficult, raises concerns about the level of human control over their activities and whether they remain under meaningful human control.
- Activities at sea – particularly those underwater – are more difficult to observe and monitor than activities on land or in the air, leading to questions about what levels of transparency are needed over maritime drone operations.
- Drone technology – for both aerial drones and drone boats – is relatively cheap and easily obtained. As a result, drones are routinely being used by non-state actors in combat. ■

Extract from Drone Wars UK

What actually happened on October 7th?

THE RATHER SCRAMBLED official account has been challenged by other Israeli sources from the beginning. Since the attack Netanyahu's government has used it to suppress any criticism of his genocidal attack on Palestine. Brave Israelis have been imprisoned and threatened for challenging the account and the bombing.

In his letter to the Oxford Times, February 22nd, Jonathen Saunders reports that Yasmin Porat, appearing soon after on Israeli television, surprised her interviewer by describing how humanely she and other fellow hostages were treated until Israeli police arrived and began shooting indiscriminately, killing 40 Hamas but also 10 hostages.

The Israeli news website Haartz online described a veritable bloodbath when IDF tanks and Apache helicopters destroyed whole houses killing "at least 112" at Kibbutz Be'eri and that all vehicles, heading back to Gaza, often containing hostages, were targeted.

Can indiscriminate bombing of civilians ever be "defensive"?

Whatever happened that day, nothing can justify the devastation of a country and the killing of more than 26,000 Palestinian civilians. Even the BBC with its

continued mantra of " Hamas, designated a terrorist organisation", could not suppress the horror of the indiscriminate slaughter. It didn't extend its coverage to explain that solar panels and reservoirs were targeted so that the Palestinians were completely deprived of electricity and water. However our news channels did convey the ruthlessness of the aid convoy not being able to get through and Oxford doctors with their links to Gaza, having trained and knowing many doctors there, did tell us of the trauma of children having to be treated of serious wounds and amputations without sufficient medicines, even sometimes anaesthetics. Now we are hearing of the many cases of gangrene suffered by these children because of the lack of medicines in their treatment.

We have seen the horror of war on our screens as never before.

The horror of war has come to us through the "balance" BBC coverage as people who have seen it will start to question the indiscriminate killings that bombs cause to civilians. Bruce Kent realised basic truth when he moved on to found his campaign "Abolish War". We must work out how to do this, or, with the new "usable" nuclear weapons, the whole world will be at risk. ■

Safe, affordable and climate-friendly energy

THE INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR lobby, at the invitation of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Prime Minister of Belgium, will hold a nuclear energy summit in Brussels on 21 March 2024.

New nuclear power is too slow to tackle the climate emergency. Nuclear power plants under development have been severely delayed and won't be able to meaningfully contribute to cutting carbon emissions this decade. Whereas greenhouse gas emissions must be drastically cut by 2030, any new nuclear plants announced today would not be connected to the grid until well past this deadline. A rapid shift away from fossil fuels should instead focus on building a 100% renewable energy system coupled with energy efficiency and measures to avoid excessive energy use.

Nuclear energy is much more expensive than renewables. While nuclear projects face huge budget overruns and cancellations due to sky-rocketing costs, renewables are cheaper than ever before, declining sharply in relative costs compared to nuclear. New nuclear power plants are

up to nearly four times as expensive as wind power, according to the 2023 World Nuclear Industry Status Report. Governments need to invest in proven climate solutions, such as home insulation, public transport, and renewable energy.

Nuclear power is dangerous. From mining for uranium to radioactive waste, nuclear power production is a risk to people's health, safety, and the environment. Nuclear power can be used as military targets and increase the risk of spreading nuclear weapons across the world, the use of depleted uranium and atomic bombs. The climate crisis also increases the risks involved in nuclear power, as increased heatwaves, droughts, storms, and flooding all pose significant threats to the plants themselves and to the systems that aim to prevent nuclear accidents.

We are living in a climate emergency. Time is precious, and too many governments are wasting it with nuclear energy fairy tales. What we demand is a just transition towards a safe, renewable and affordable energy system that secures jobs and protects life on our planet. ■ **Nuala Young**

**CEASE
FIRE
NOW.**

Diary

**Every Saturday 2 to 3pm
Women in Black at the Martyrs'
Memorial**

March

Wednesday 6th – Faringdon Peace Group
– Gaza war.

8th-9th – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp –
Nuala 01865 749459.

Tuesday 19th - Abingdon Peace 8pm webinar
with Salisbury CND.

**Vigil every Monday War Memorial 8.15-8.45
Peacemakers.**

April

Wednesday 3rd – Faringdon Peace Group
meeting – 7.30pm.

12th-13th – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp
– Nuala 01865 749459.

Tuesday 16th – Abingdon Peace Group – 8.00pm
**Vigil every Monday War Memorial 8.15-8.45
Peacemakers.**

Friday 26th – Oxford CND benefit concert, Friends
Meeting House. Nick Gill and Oxford Classic Jazz
Band.

Best list of news items, webinars etc:

https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/news_items

<https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/events>

<https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk>



Latest News

Stop War!

AS THE UKRAINE WAR enters its third year, we are simultaneously witnessing genocide in Gaza, and the Middle East being set on fire. **This is why it is so important to have a strong anti-war movement.**

The war in Ukraine has resulted in a huge increase in military spending, at a time when our public services are on their knees. It has brought the world closer than ever to nuclear armageddon and has resulted in food and energy shortages across the globe. **It is time this war came to an end.**

Membership subscriptions 2024

For details of Bankers Orders

e-mail: liztaylor@virgin.net

If you pay your subscription by cheque please can you pay us as soon as possible. Oxford CND needs that money to campaign and send you information and newsletters. **WE ARE ALSO VERY GRATEFUL FOR EXTRA DONATIONS.**

Subs are very reasonable – £10 or £5 low wage, but are essential for us to continue to campaign. Standing orders can continue as before.

Make cheques for 2024 payable to Oxford CND and send to: **Membership, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP**

Oxford CND Newsletter by email

Some members already receive the Oxford CND newsletter only by email. If you would like to receive the newsletter online please let Liz Taylor, the membership secretary know on:

liz.taylor5@virgin.net

Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Please contact: Nuala Young
nualayoung@hotmail.com

Oxford



Contributions to the next issue...

Please send letters and items to:

Newsletter, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP

No later than: **Monday 22nd April 2024**