



# OXFORD CND

## NEWSLETTER

May / June 2024



**The US is bringing new B61-12 nuclear bomb weapons of mass destruction to USAF Lakenheath. THIS MAKES US ALL A TARGET IN A NUCLEAR WAR. There will be nation-wide anti-nuclear actions on Saturday 11th May, in Oxford on the 10th May, and a peace camp at Lakenheath in July.**

**Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament**

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# No, it's not normal

THE SHADOW CAST OVER humanity by the catastrophes of Gaza and Ukraine is already immense, but an even greater one is hanging over us. And it is becoming part of everyday (and every evening on *Newsnight* and similar news programmes) discourse. We have already had the ineffable Grant Shapps warning us that we are in a “pre-war” situation. Far right lobbies and politicians urge us to spend more, and more, on “defence”. “The President must revitalize the US strategic arsenal”, declares the Heritage Foundation. The security minister Tom Tugendhat (breaking cabinet discipline) demands that the UK should increase defence spending to 2.5 percent of GDP “now – as soon as possible”.

We would expect Ukraine’s foreign minister to claim that if his country is defeated by Russia then we face the prospect of a Third World War. But the real worry is that such a prospect is being normalised in a way not seen since the height of the Cold War -- and it is even more threatening now than then. Along with it is the “modernisation” (code for further development) of the nuclear weapons arsenals of all the major nuclear weapons powers, and the development, too, of more dangerous – more prone to error – control (AI) and delivery (hyper-sonic) systems.

When the Cold War ended, the smaller wars that followed were regarded as regrettable but as a consequence of the loosening of previous superpower restraint, or as “local” wars that could be dealt with one by one. Even the major war that followed in Iraq was seen as devastating for the Middle East, certainly, but essentially confined to that region.

The Western triumphalism that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union precluded serious awareness that the West’s neo-liberal and neo-colonial grip was also loosening, and that new constellations of competing power and protest would emerge. Ukraine and Gaza have finally brought home the long evident truth: we only have one world to exist in, and the failure to solve its problems threatens our entire existence. The current confrontation between Israel and

Iran (paused as I write though for how long?) is a reminder of the dangers of high-wire and high-risk miscalculation by political leaders obsessed with national and personal prestige. Let us not forget that Iran’s nuclear programme, and Israel’s nuclear weapons, are tied up in this unnerving equation of threat and counter-threat.

“With the world in such a state of crisis, why does not CND get more support”, mused my friend as we left an inspirational celebration of the life of Pat Arrowsmith, organised by the LSE Library, in April. (The Library’s current exhibition of peace and anti-nuclear material from its archives of CND and other groups is on till 15 September and well worth visiting). There are easy answers to the question, such as: CND has been going for so long that it lacks the novelty power or imagination to

attract younger supporters. More broadly, the “optimism bias” which keeps humanity going deters most people from contemplating more disturbing scenarios. These are inadequate answers today.

As the world enters the most dangerous phase yet of human existence, more people are accepting this dystopian reality. The climate crisis is the obvious example, but it is true also of the dangers of global war. A YouGov

poll in January showed that a majority of British people – 53 percent – think that it is likely there will be another world war in the next five to ten years. The figure for US opinion in a similar YouGov poll was very similar.

I must admit I was unaware of these polls until I googled “third world war” for this article, but that underlines the challenge before the peace movement. It is not the general public who will not face reality but politicians and media who do not wish them too. In this respect nothing has changed from the years of the Cold War.

This conspiracy of silence (after all, the nuclear threat has never gone away) is however beginning to fracture, as those same politicians and media start to talk up, for their own purpose, the danger of global war. It is a challenge to us: is it also an opportunity? ■

**John Gittings**



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# Opposition to nuclear weapons at LAKENHEATH

THE NEW PLANES AT LAKENHEATH will be able to take smaller as well as the larger nuclear weapons. People are now referring to these smaller bombs as "usable" weapons, tactical rather than strategic. There is a real concern that one of the pilots from different countries in Europe to be trained by NATO to fly the F35 jets and drop these bombs might start a "limited" nuclear war in Europe.

## **National CND is asking people to raise awareness by actions in their localities on May 11th.**

As some of us may be at the Aldermaston Women's Camp on the 11th, **Oxford CND will be having a stall from 11am to 1.30 on May 10th.** Helpers needed. If you can volunteer even to give us a lift with the table

for the stall or to do a 30minute shift, please text me, Nuala, on 07806600862 or e-mail: nualayoun@hotmail.com. Or if you think there should be a different type of action please let us know.

## **JULY walk from Norwich, demo and camp at Lakenheath**

Angie Zelter of Trident Ploughshares and many others have launched a new group called Lakenheath Alliance for Peace, LAP. Angie writes: "We now have a good group of local people based in Norfolk and Suffolk working together with members of 14 plus organisations who have agreed to support LAP. See <https://lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk/about-us/alliance-organisations/>



## **Wanton destruction of people and climate**

One UK general at last year's DSEI Arms Fair announced that we should no longer see ourselves in a post war but rather pre-war situation. This is something we need desperately to challenge. Now, more than ever it has become clear that any war now puts us at risk of nuclear escalation.

### **Even before war happens the military, with its deployment of people and weapons is costing us the earth.**

The US successfully lobbied the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 to exclude military emissions from the world's Carbon budgets. The US military alone emits more Carbon than whole other countries.

It has been horrific to watch the killing and destruction in Gaza on our screens. In the first 5 days of the attack, the Israeli government declared on social media, that it had dropped 6,000 bombs on Gaza. With the new Lavender targetting AI system, the killing and destruction is speeded up and wilder. Israel's Targets Administrations Division have boasted – "We work quickly with no time to delve deep into the target." With this speed and ruthlessness, Israel has now killed at least 32,000 people and completely destroyed 46,000 homes. Bombs are by nature terrorist and indiscriminate.

### **In the first 2 months of the war on Gaza, 281,31 metric tonnes of CO2 were emitted and this will be tripled by later destruction and the carbon emitted in the rebuilding. Similarly, the war in the Ukraine has had massive carbon implications.**

Military leaders talk of ways of reducing their Carbon footprint but Scientists for Global Responsibility say that things have to change totally.

**"We need to build trust and diplomacy. Wars cost the climate and must now be avoided at all costs".**

Taken from Scientists for Global Responsibility, [www.sgr.org.uk](http://www.sgr.org.uk)

I would like to add Oxford CND's name to the Alliance and am willing to be one of the names who will be kept in touch. Any other volunteers? ■

**Nuala Young**

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# Military and Civil nuclear mix

Until recently, the UK government has always said that civil and military nuclear technologies were separate things, for example in response to claims that expansion of civil nuclear power capacity could lead to proliferation of nuclear weapons making capacity. But, as researchers at the University of Sussex have relentlessly catalogued, there seems to have been a change of view underway, culminating formally in March in a new policy document from No. 10 Downing Street. Entitled 'Building the Nuclear Workforce of Tomorrow' it claims that 'domestic [civil] nuclear capability is vital to our national defence and energy security, underpinning our nuclear deterrent and securing cheaper, more reliable energy for UK consumers'. So, they are intertwined and mutually beneficial- we need both! UK Prime Minister Sunak says that 'in a more dangerous and contested world, the UK's continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent is more vital than ever' and that civil nuclear power is the 'perfect antidote to the energy challenges facing Britain- it's green, cheaper in the long term and will ensure the UK's energy security for the long term

Military interests are pushing new nuclear power – and the UK government has finally admitted it.

The UK government has announced the "biggest expansion of the [nuclear] sector in 70 years". This follows years of extraordinarily expensive support.

Why is this? Official assessments acknowledge nuclear performs poorly compared to alternatives. With renewables and storage significantly cheaper, climate goals are achieved faster, more affordably and reliably by diverse other means. The only new power station under construction is still not finished, running ten years late and many times over budget.

So again: why does this ailing technology enjoy such intense and persistent generosity?

The UK government has for a long time failed even to try to justify support for nuclear power in the kinds of detailed substantive energy terms that were once routine. The last properly rigorous energy white paper was in 2003.

Even before wind and solar costs plummeted, this recognised nuclear as "unattractive". The delayed 2020 white paper didn't detail any comparative nuclear and renewable costs, let alone justify why this more expensive option receives such disproportionate funding.

A document published with the latest announcement, Civil Nuclear Roadmap to 2050,

is also more about affirming official support than substantively justifying it. More significant – in this supposedly "civil" strategy – are multiple statements about addressing "civil and military nuclear ambitions" together to "identify opportunities to align the two across government".

These pressures are acknowledged by other states with nuclear weapons, but were until now treated like a secret in the UK: civil nuclear energy maintains the skills and supply chains needed for military nuclear programmes.

## **The military has consistently called for civil nuclear**

Official UK energy policy documents fail substantively to justify nuclear power, but on the military side the picture is clear.

For instance, in 2006 then prime minister Tony Blair performed a U-turn to ignore his own white paper and pledge nuclear power would be "back with a vengeance". Widely criticised for resting on a "secret" process, this followed a major three volume study by the military-linked RAND Corporation for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) effectively warning that the UK "industrial base" for design, manufacture and maintenance of nuclear submarines would become unaffordable if the country phased out civil nuclear power.

A 2007 report by an executive from submarine-makers BAE Systems called for these military costs to be "masked" behind civil programmes. A Secret MoD report in 2014 (later released by freedom of information) showed starkly how declining nuclear power erodes military nuclear skills.

In repeated parliamentary hearings, academics, engineering organisations, research centres, industry bodies and trade unions urged continuing civil nuclear as a means to support military capabilities.

In 2017, submarine reactor manufacturer Rolls Royce even issued a dedicated report, marshalling the case for expensive "small modular reactors" to "relieve the Ministry of Defence of the burden of developing and retaining skills and capability".

The government itself has remained coy about acknowledging this pressure to "mask" military costs behind civilian programmes. Yet the logic is clear in repeated emphasis on the supposedly self-evident imperative to "keep the nuclear option open" – as if this were an end in itself, no matter what the cost. Energy ministers are occasionally more candid, with

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one calling civil-military distinctions “artificial” and quietly saying: “I want to include the MoD more in everything we do”.

In 2017, we submitted evidence to a parliamentary public accounts committee investigation of the deal to build Hinkley Point C power plant. On the basis of our evidence, the committee asked the then MoD head (who – notably – previously oversaw civil nuclear contract negotiations) about the military nuclear links. His response: We are completing the build of the nuclear submarines which carry conventional weaponry. We have at some point to renew the warheads, so there is very definitely an opportunity here for the nation to grasp in terms of building up its nuclear skills. I do not think that that is going to happen by accident; it is going to require concerted government action to make it happen.

This is even more evident in actions than words. For instance hundreds of millions of pounds have been prioritised for a Nuclear innovation programme and a nuclear sector deal which is “committed to increasing the opportunities for transferability between civil and defense industries”.

### **An open secret**

Despite all this, military pressures for nuclear power are not widely recognised in the UK. On the few occasions when it receives media attention, the link has been officially denied.

UK prime minister Rishi Sunak announces a US-UK-Australia nuclear submarine deal in March 2023. Etienne Laurent / EPA

Other nuclear-armed states are also striving to maintain expensive military infrastructures (especially around submarine reactors) just when the civilian industry is obsolescing. This is true in the US, France, Russia and China.

Other countries tend to be more open about it, with the interdependence acknowledged at presidential level in the US for instance. French president Emmanuel Macron summarises: “without civil nuclear power, no military nuclear power, without military nuclear, no civil nuclear”.

This is largely why nuclear-armed France is pressing the European Union to support nuclear power. This is why non-nuclear-armed Germany has phased out the nuclear technologies it once led the world in. This is why other nuclear armed states are so disproportionately fixated by nuclear power.

These military pressures help explain why the UK is in denial about poor nuclear performance, yet so supportive of general nuclear skills. Powerful military interests – with characteristic secrecy and active PR –

are driving this persistence.

Neglect of this picture makes it all the more disturbing. Outside defence budgets, off the public books and away from due scrutiny, expensive support is being lavished on a joint civil-military nuclear industrial base largely to help fund military needs. These concealed subsidies make nuclear submarines look affordable, but electricity and climate action more costly.

The conclusions are not self-evident. Some might argue military rationales justify excessive nuclear costs. But history teaches that policies are more likely to go awry if reasons are concealed. In the UK – where nuclear realities have been strongly officially denied – the issues are not just about energy, or climate, but democracy. ■

### **Authors**

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### **Disclosure statement**

Andy Stirling has for many years served as a member of the Sussex Energy Group, a leading academic research centre at the University of Sussex concerned with energy policy issues. Some of the research reported here was supported by academic grants awarded competitively in previous years from the Economic and Social Research Council. He has also served in a number of related governmental advisory positions over the years, including recently as an external advisor to the UK Government’s evaluation of its Nuclear Innovation Programme. He also serves as an unpaid patron of the Nuclear Information Service, an unpaid member of the Nuclear Consultation Group and an unpaid trustee of Greenpeace UK Limited. He does not work for, consult with or own shares in any company or organisation that would benefit from this article.

Some of the research reported here was supported by academic grants awarded competitively in previous years from the Economic and Social Research Council. Phil Johnstone has for many years served as a member of the Sussex Energy Group, a leading academic research institute at the University of Sussex concerned with policy issues around energy. Phil serves as an unpaid patron of the Nuclear Information Service, and an unpaid member of the Nuclear Consultation Group. Phil does not work for, consult with or own shares in any company or organisation that would benefit from this article. ■

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# Starmer's spending on weapons of war

LABOUR leader Keir Starmer faced backlash as he vowed to put billions of pounds into the pockets of war-hungry arms companies after claiming there are no funds for cash-starved public services. Starmer has announced plans to boost Britain's defence budget to 2.5 per cent of GDP. Matching the Tories' current pledge, costs could amount to £9 billion. He made the announcement ahead of a visit to a BAE Systems shipyard in Barrow-in-Furness, where the next generation of Trident nuclear submarines are being built. According to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, costs for the programme could spiral as high as £205bn. During the visit he pledged to "triple lock" Labour's commitment to Britain's nuclear submarine programme, backing the building of the four new submarines.

He reiterated his support for AUKUS, a security pact with Australia and the United States, which involves the development of nuclear submarines as part of Washington's bid to encircle China with military alliances.

Accompanied by Labour's shadow defence secretary John Healey and Australian high commissioner to the UK Stephen Smith, Starmer boasted that he was first Labour leader to visit the shipyard in over 30 years.

Appealing to readers in the right-wing *Daily Mail*, Starmer wrote that his party has "changed" and that his commitment to Britain's nuclear weapons was "unshakeable" and "absolute." Starmer said that the nuclear deterrent is the "bedrock" of Labour's plan to keep Britain safe. He added the plans were "prioritising British jobs, British skills and much-needed economic growth here on our shores."

SNP defence spokesperson Martin Docherty-Hughes MP called the announcement "grotesque." He said: "This money would be better spent on a raft of other things – not least investing in the green energy gold rush, which would ensure Scotland, with all its renewable energy potential, could be a green energy powerhouse of the 21st century."

Starmer's plans stand in stark contrast from his predecessor Jeremy Corbyn, who said he would never instruct the use of nuclear weapons if he became prime minister, and was vice-president of the CND.

Commenting on the plans, CND general

secretary Kate Hudson said: "Putting billions of pounds into the pockets of arms companies and their investors will not reinvigorate the economy in any meaningful way. Instead, it takes vital funds and skills away from what could be spent on the just transition: like energy-efficient homes, better public transport and a public health service that saves lives and heals people. By committing to the modernisation and expansion of Britain's nuclear arsenal Labour is contributing to the global arms race and tensions that we are currently seeing."

She added that if Labour wanted to offer a positive option to the electorate, "it would commit to scrapping Trident and its replacement, and put nuclear disarmament at the forefront of its foreign policy agenda."

Stop the War Coalition convener Lindsey German said: "The increase in military spending, the provision of new and dangerous weapons, and the increasingly belligerent language surrounding the new cold war with China, are only fuelling the threat of war, not containing it. It's incredible that, when our public services are in deep crisis, completely starved of funds, Starmer's only spending commitment is to weapons of war."

Despite plans to boost the defence budget, in February, Starmer blamed "fiscal rules" for his U-turn on a pledge to spend £28bn a year on a green transition.

Last year he said there were "**clear rules of what we can't afford**," when he refused to commit to free school meals, and doubled down on his decision not to scrap the two-child benefit cap, which according to Save the Children, would take 250,000 children out of poverty if lifted.

This week, Labour's shadow health secretary Wes Streeting said that Labour will not give the NHS extra cash without "major surgery" which includes ramping up reliance on the private sector.

Momentum co-chair Hilary Schan pointed out that for months Labour has said "there's simply no money left". He went on: "Yet at a stroke, Starmer has today made a massive, permanent spending commitment."

She said that the priority should be "feeding the millions of children in the UK living in poverty, and reviving our beleaguered public services, especially the NHS, not bombs and bullets fuelling more conflict." ■

**Morning Star, April 12, 2024**

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# Special Nuclear Relationship

KATE HUDSON: Whoever is in the White House after the upcoming presidential election, one thing is clear: Britain has to break its 'special nuclear relationship' with the US. We're all familiar with the so-called 'special relationship', basically tying Britain into really bad foreign policy decisions. But not so many people know about the US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement (MDA) – the world's most extensive nuclear sharing agreement. Known in full as the 'Agreement between the UK and the USA for cooperation in the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes', the treaty initially established an agreement between both countries to exchange classified information to develop their respective nuclear weapon systems. At the start, the MDA prohibited the transfer of nuclear weapons, but 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 United States Congress. 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 this is an even greater cause for concern. The time has come to really vigorously oppose this Agreement.

Little-known to the public, the UK military regularly flies planes carrying highly radioactive material to the US in order to maintain its nuclear weapons system, Trident.

• **These flights “pose a significant risk to communities across the UK should there be an accident, says Nukewatch**

• **“How can we have an independent foreign policy if the cornerstone of Britain’s security relies so heavily on another state?”, asks CND**

The little-known flights are a lifeline sustaining the 'special relationship' embodied in the secretive US-UK Mutual Defence Agreement due to be renewed later this year without the need for any parliamentary scrutiny or even approval.

At least ten of the special round trips between RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire and US military bases, usually by large RAF C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft, take place every year, according to Nukewatch, which monitors traffic in nuclear

weapons and their components.

In a joint report with Nukewatch, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) told Declassified: “The UK cannot claim to have an independent nuclear weapons system when it is so reliant on the US for technical information and nuclear materials, including these special nuclear flights.

“By having such a direct involvement in Britain’s nuclear weapons technology, the US exercises significant leverage over the UK’s foreign and defence policy”, it added.

The RAF planes fly from Brize Norton either over the Cotswolds and the Bristol and Cardiff areas before crossing the Atlantic, or over Gloucestershire and the South Wales valleys, heading out to sea over Swansea and the Gower peninsular.

Their destinations include Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, a convenient location for access to US nuclear laboratories and manufacturing plants in New Mexico and northern Texas, and McGhee Tyson Airport, Knoxville, close to nuclear sites in Tennessee.

Although the MoD does not reveal the exact nature of the cargoes, Nukewatch says it can conclude on the basis of its investigations that material in RAF aircraft returning to Britain includes tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen which is used in nuclear warheads.

Tritium has a relatively short half-life of twelve years, and thus requires constant replacement. Britain does not have facilities to produce tritium and needs to replenish supplies from the US.

“The RAF cargo also includes highly enriched uranium (HEU) used for nuclear submarine reactor fuel and warhead components”

The RAF cargo also includes highly enriched uranium (HEU) used for nuclear submarine reactor fuel and warhead components. Uranium fuel is burnt up in submarine reactors and cannot be reused.

Britain does not have facilities to enrich uranium to the high levels used in submarine reactor fuel and so either HEU must be purchased from the US, or low enriched uranium must be sent to the US for further enrichment.

Plutonium for warhead components has been exchanged with the US in past decades, according to Nukewatch. The cargo is also likely to include security-classified non-nuclear warhead components such as arming, fusing and firing systems as well as radioactive materials and equipment used in nuclear security exercises. ■



# Diary

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

## May

**Wednesday 1st** – Faringdon Peace Group meeting.

**Friday 10th** – Oxford CND stall City Centre – Lakenheath protest – Nuala 01865 749459.

**10th-11th** – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – Nuala 01865 749459.

**Saturday 11th** – Abingdon Peace Group – Lakenheath protest.

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

**Saturday 11th** – Faringdon Peace Group Corn Exchange Lakenheath protest.

**Tuesday 21st** – Abingdon Peace Group meeting.

## June

**Wednesday 5th** – Faringdon Peace Group meeting – 7.30pm.

**7th-9th** – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – Nuala 01865 749459.

**Tuesday 18th** – Abingdon Peace Group – 8.00pm.

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

## Best list of news items, webinars etc:

[https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/news\\_items](https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/news_items)

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

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



## Latest News

### Radioactive flights

LITTLE-KNOWN TO THE PUBLIC, the UK military regularly flies planes carrying highly radioactive material to the US in order to maintain its nuclear weapons system, Trident.

An exercise in 2010 rehearsed the response to an accident involving a US Air Force plane which had crashed and caught fire, damaging nuclear weapons on board and spreading radioactive contamination around the crash site.

Assessors concluded that, had there been a real emergency, civilian personnel would have been at risk from explosions and radioactive contamination. Experience suggests that emergency arrangements would be totally inadequate to protect members of the public.

### Membership subscriptions 2024

#### For details of Bankers Orders

**e-mail: [liztaylor@virgin.net](mailto: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](mailto:liz.taylor5@virgin.net)**

### Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

Please contact: Nuala Young  
**[nualayoung@hotmail.com](mailto:nualayoung@hotmail.com)**



### Contributions to the next issue...

Please send letters and items to:

Newsletter, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP

No later than: **Monday 24th June 2024**