



OXFORD CND

NEWSLETTER

July / August 2025



**BRITAIN ALREADY HAS NUCLEAR-ARMED SUBMARINES AND NOW
IT PLANS TO GET NUCLEAR-ARMED FIGHTER JETS!**

The threat of nuclear weapons being used in war is rising.

**Having more nukes won't make us safer. It just makes
the threat of them being used more likely.**

**Instead of wasting billions more on toxic weapons of mass
destruction the government should spend it on the NHS,
schools, social care, on building affordable homes and taking
action to halt climate breakdown.**

**JOIN US AT THIS CRITICAL PROTEST
NO NEW NUKES!**



Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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The Idiocy of War

"FOR THE PAST six thousand years", wrote Victor Hugo in 1865, "the quarrelsome have made wars. And God has spent his time in vain, making flowers and the stars". "Beyond glory and its phantoms", he continued, "beyond triumph's cavalcade, huddle all the poor mothers, while their children are afraid". And Hugo ends with this cri de coeur: "Yet the dawn is on the horizon, and I cannot but ask why: How can we hate our fellow humans, when the lark is in the sky?"

I recalled this wonderful poem recently while visiting the Victor Hugo Museum in Paris, just as Israel's bombs and missiles had started a new round of death and devastation, and justified fears for worse ahead in the whole Middle East. Any larks – or doves – who might be flying have been brought to earth. Returning home, I delved into the notes for my *The Glorious Art of Peace*, published over a decade ago when the world seemed somewhat more hopeful. There I found another poem, written around the same time, in which Hugo offers a more earthy perspective on war. A drunken soldier who has lost a leg narrates how he has been decorated for bravery by the monarch. But, "staggering back I noticed that he still stood upon two feet." The girl whom the soldier would like to marry prefers someone who is "complete". What price the song of victory now?

The images that the term "trench warfare" evokes now are those of the mud, blood and terror of the Western Front, but in 1876 Hugo had already described these in a speech seeking to demolish the myth of glorious war. (Trench warfare had been a notorious feature of the Crimean War and the American Civil War). The reality, he said, was one of miserable soldiers without shelter or fire to keep warm, wearing sodden clothes that froze, "racked by dysentery and typhus, killed where they were sleeping, poisoned by the water they drink... and fighting on just to become dead bodies". War itself, he concluded, "digs a giant trench for which we pay dear".

The Maison de Victor Hugo – the large apartment that Hugo occupied for many years –

sits on the corner of the Place des Vosges, a typical Parisian square with benches under the lime trees, children playing around the fountains, and good cafes across the road. The museum gives a vivid account of Hugo's life, work and passions, with portraits, manuscripts, drawings (some by himself) and contemporary furnishings. Yet something is missing: there is no reference anywhere to the International Peace Congress of 1849 in Paris over which Hugo presided, nor to his opening address to it. Hugo's biographers also tend to minimise his commitment to peace – one of them even dismisses it as affectation. (There is a parallel



here with the way that Tolstoy's adoption of pacifism is sometimes treated as the foible of a great writer in his declining years). Certainly, Hugo's approach was not wholly pacific. In his earlier writings he admired Napoleon and military heroism, and later in the spirit of the time he accepted the necessity of wars of national liberation – which alone would bring peace, he asserted. Like many other peace campaigners in the latter half of the 19th century, he held the optimistic view that modern progress would make

war irrational and obsolete. As he told the Paris Congress:

"Before long, men will traverse the earth, as the gods of Homer did the sky, in three paces! But yet a little time, and the electric wire of concord shall encircle the globe and embrace the world."

But as time went on, his vision became sharper and his condemnation more pronounced, the more so after the disaster of the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. It was most powerfully expressed in his verse, and especially in the volume of poems he published the following year with the title *L'Année terrible*. To conclude with a quote from a poem called "The idiocy of war":

"Oh, drinker of blood, wild, withered and hideous, dragging humanity into its own drunkenness... all your ravages simply restore the evil, and replace the animal with the brute!" ■

John Gittings

www.johngittings.com

UK to purchase nuclear-capable F-35A jets

ON 24TH JUNE 2025, the UK government announced that it will purchase 12 US-made F-35A stealth fighter jets, costing between \$80 to \$100 million each – to be stationed at RAF Marham, near Kings Lynn in Norfolk. These planes, which can also carry conventional weapons, are expected to carry American nuclear B61- 12 weapons, and will thereby join NATO's airborne nuclear mission. The Nuclear Weapons Storage and Security Systems would have to be re-furbished or renewed. The F-35a will be alongside the UK's F-35B aircraft carrier strike force, which carry conventional weapons.

The return to this airborne delivery system for so-called 'tactical' nuclear weapons – which the UK abandoned in 1998 – marks a dangerous shift in nuclear posture and further expands the UK's commitment to nuclear warlike policies.

The American B61 nuclear weapon can also be carried by F-35s and F-16s currently employed by the German, Dutch, Belgian, Italian and Turkish air forces, with all controlled by NATO's nuclear planning group, although final say on their deployment rests with the U.S. President and any UK operation involving these developments would be effectively driven by the American government. In this instance, the deployment of British aircraft will require the Prime Minister's approval as well, unlike the current Trident submarine based strategic nuclear deterrent that (may?) answer only to the Prime Minister. Any UK operation involving these developments would be effectively driven by the American government.

At the moment the UK's so-called 'deterrent' is limited to just one patrolling Vanguard class

submarine carrying eight American Trident ballistic missiles which between them have about 40 UK-made but American-design influenced warheads each with about 100 kiloton equivalents of explosive – about 6 times more powerful than the atom bombs dropped in Japan in 1945.

The B12-61 weapons carried by the F-35 bombers are 'dual purpose' variable, conventional, or nuclear missiles with four different explosive yields, of 0.3 kilotons (kt), 1.5kt, 10kt and 50kt. They will not be made in the UK, but could be deployed for 'tactical' use which many military strategists warn could nevertheless escalate to an 'all-out' nuclear exchange. We know that the result of using even one nuclear missile on an urban area would lead to deaths, severe injuries, acute radiation sickness, and long-term impacts of radiation exposure such as cancer and genetic damage.

In addition, the transfer of American know-how and material to the UK contravenes Article I of the NPT, which says "nuclear-weapon states pledge not to transfer nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices to any recipient". As a signatory, Britain has agreed to take steps to disarm its nuclear weapons, not increase them, and this decision has also been made without any parliamentary debate.

The millions that will be spent on these jets, and the millions more that would be needed to upgrade RAF Marham and maintain the jets, will be coming out of further cuts to public services, to our NHS and our social care system. **We should get rid of nuclear weapons before they get rid of us. ■**



Left: A US-made F-35A stealth fighter jet – each one will cost between \$80 to \$100 million each.

International Conscientious Objectors Day

ON MAY 15TH A CELEBRATION took place in Bonn Square, Oxford with songs, speeches, poetry and reflections. Symon Hill spoke movingly about the growing numbers of young people currently in jail all over the world for refusing to fight, from Ukrainian pacifists to Israeli refuseniks.

Annette Bygott told us about over 1,200 COs executed in Hitler's Germany. Sue Smith read out the names of many of Oxfordshire CO's in WW1

while Oxford Seagreen Singers and Didcot Red Kites sang.

Speaker David Couzens, a tank commander for 30 years, heads up charity Tearfund's peacebuilding team and works with the "Rethinking Security" network to promote the idea that real security cannot be achieved through war, but through justice and co-operation. "None of us are secure until all of us are". ■



How Iran could build a bomb in secret

IRAN ENTERS 'ERA of nuclear ambiguity' with its capabilities 'hidden and unverifiable'. Despite recent US strikes on key Iranian nuclear facilities, experts believe Tehran may still have the capability to develop a nuclear weapon. The Trump administration is reportedly prepared to offer Tehran financial incentives to strike a deal over its nuclear programme.

Sources familiar with current plans said that Washington could offer investment in a civilian energy worth up to \$30bn (£21.9bn) if the regime is willing to abandon uranium enrichment and adopt transparency measures, as well as sanctions relief. But Iran has signalled that it intends to rebuild the programme after acknowledging heavy damage by US strikes, and it could do so in secret after passing a law to suspend co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which would block inspections on its nuclear sites and pave the way to withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iranian officials, for their part, continue to deny any intention of developing a nuclear bomb.

The strikes caused substantial damage to critical

nuclear facilities, including the enrichment and conversion sites at Natanz, Fordo, and Esfahan, according to US officials. However, intelligence reports and satellite imagery indicate that Iran likely relocated a large portion of its enriched uranium stockpile. The IAEA has acknowledged that although inspections at declared sites have been hindered, there is only limited visibility into any potential undisclosed or secret facilities. A clandestine "breakout" would prioritise storage of any remaining highly enriched uranium, he added, which could potentially be further enriched to weapons-grade at an unknown facility.

It is imperative that the Trump administration, through mediators like Qatar, is transforming this current momentum of the ceasefire into a sustainable and mutually acceptable nuclear deal, including enrichment constraints and effective oversight mechanisms

Iran may have the capability to build a nuclear weapon and that negotiating a new agreement, similar to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal reached in 2015 and in 2018—could be the basis of a new deal. ■

NATO's new spending target: 5% of GDP

IN A LANDMARK SHIFT, the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have endorsed a new national spending benchmark: 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to be invested annually in 'core defence requirements as well as defence-and security-related spending' by 2035. Enshrined in a joint declaration from the 2025 NATO Summit in The Hague, the spending pledge is being hailed as "historic" by its proponents. In fact, it more than doubles NATO's long-standing 2 per cent of GDP spending guideline and signals a renewed focus on military preparedness in an increasingly uncertain geopolitical environment.

While the commitment was primarily about sending political messages, it has significant fiscal and operational implications for the NATO members that deserve careful scrutiny.

A political signal, not a spending plan

The 5 per cent target is, above all, a political statement. It aims to demonstrate resolve, unity and a shared commitment among allies to shoulder the burden of defence and security – primarily as a deterrent to NATO's adversaries, foremost among them Russia. It builds on the precedent of the 2 per cent benchmark adopted in 2014, but with a more assertive posture in a markedly changed geopolitical landscape.

The 5 per cent target strongly indicates that NATO is prioritizing deterrence, strength and

military preparedness over diplomatic mechanisms like arms control. This reflects a broader shift in how security is conceptualized. Whereas the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) was once heralded as the 'cornerstone of European security', embodying a vision of security built on arms control, transparency and confidence-building mechanisms (CBMs), security today is generally viewed through the lens of hard power and deterrence.

SIPRI

"The situation is exposing in the most brutal way that Nato has always been a vehicle for US power, just at the time when the US is at its most belligerent and unpopular around the world.

"The response of the European leaders, led initially by Sir Keir Starmer, has been to scramble to rearm across the continent. The claim is that this is for security purposes and to assert military independence. In reality, the European leaders are doing exactly what Trump wants.

And they are doing it to try to signal their continued relevance, to show Trump and the US ruling class that Nato still has clout and that they will be useful partners in whatever the wounded superpower does next to try to maintain its dominance in the world." ■

Chris Nineham
Stop the War UK

'Drone Wars UK "No Bombing" demo USAF Fairford 25th June.'



CAMP PORTALOO APPEAL



Above: A temporary Portaloo makes a huge difference, especially for women with disabilities.

A portaloo is, of course, just a tool to help enable Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp (AWPC) to take place. The Camp puts AWE Aldermaston on the map. Greenham Women started AWPC with Cruisewatch and other Peace Women joining in the 1980s and 90s.

New women continue to join us to maintain the monthly weekend Camp. **A temporary Portaloo makes a huge difference, especially for women with disabilities who had been struggling without a proper loo. It also makes it easier for women newer to this kind of protest to attend – privacy and dignity are a big deal.**

Now our funds have dwindled we need regular small donations from a lot more people or a few groups who can make a regular donation from more people!

Portaloos cost £168 monthly **and** £234 for an Accessible one. Please help if you can by emailing **grandi.mcdonald@gmail.com** who will then ring you with AWPC bank details. ■

The Strategic Offence Review

MANY OF US HAVE noticed, for some time, that we are being swept up on a warm tide of nostalgia for war. Yet we have also seen on our screen a glimpse of the horrific effects of war in both Gaza and the Ukraine.

In the latest Strategic Review Plans the government does indeed start with the premise that there is a huge cost, human and economic that wars create but then proceeds to outline plans to invest billions of pounds in offensive and cowardly weaponry that will target other countries and their civilians and create further enormous devastation.

The government plans to invest more billions in F35 bomber planes, drones and the AI technology that has already speeded up multiple targeting to the point where the "collateral" damage has created over 60,000 civilian deaths in Gaza. It

seems that no one will be safe from this targeting. The Big Brother society is going Global.

It is really quite shocking how these new AI systems are being used by the US and Israel to "take out" any opposition leaders. The terror of drones came home to me in the story of 2 young people fleeing Tehran on the motorway and noticing how they were being pursued by a drone, fled their car running into bushes nearby only to be killed by the drone. So, our tax is going to a system of total control of our own citizens as well as threat to others.

Another £15 billion is added to the £210 bn budget for smaller 'useable' nuclear weapons.

At the same time the government is cutting 5 billion in disability benefits, a quarter cut in the Health Service in real terms. ■

Nuala Young

NICK GILL'S OXFORD
CLASSIC JAZZ
CND BENEFIT CONCERT 2025



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2025

7:00 PM – 9:30 PM

ENTRY £14/£8 (CONCESSIONS)

REFRESHMENTS FROM 6:30

WWW.CLASSICJAZZ.UK 43ST. GILES

"SWINGING AGAINST THE BOMB!"



Diary

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

July

Tuesday 1st – Oxfordshire Peace Campaign
Zoom 4.30pm.

Wednesday 2nd – Faringdon Peace Group,
Friends Meeting – 7.30pm.

Saturday 5th – Faringdon peace picnic
19 Coxwell Road – 12.30pm.

11th – 13th – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp
– Nuala 01865 749459.

Mondays – Abingdon Peace Group.

Vigil every Monday – War Memorial 8.15-8.45
Peacemakers.

August

Mondays – Abingdon Peace Group

Vigil every Monday – War Memorial 8.15-8.45
Peacemakers.

2nd – Leafletting Market Place – 11.00am

6th – Lantern floating – Peace Pole, St Ethelwold
– 7.00pm.

8th-10th Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp
– Nuala 01865 749459.

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>

Salisbury Vigils virtual tour

– <https://youtu.be/IOTk0Qm7hWI>



Latest News



The 'Alternative Defence Review' by a working group chaired by Kate Hudson (CND Vice-President) with Alex Gordon (former RMT President) and Sam Mason (CND Trade Union Advisory Group), calls for a radical break with successive UK governments' failed security and defence policies.

Membership subscriptions

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 2025 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
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Contributions to the next issue...

Please send letters and items to:

Newsletter, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP

No later than: **Sunday 24th August 2025**