

Croughton Demonstration – Keep Space for Peace Week 2025

Dave Webb

Thank you for inviting me today and I am so sorry not to be able to be there at the start of Keep Space for Peace Week. I am afraid that circumstances have made it very difficult to leave home now and so I send my apologies and this message.

I have been convenor of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space for a long time now. It was founded in 1992 by the joint efforts of the *Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice*; *Citizens for Peace in Space* in Colorado Springs and Karl Grossman a professor of journalism from New York.

There are 29 board members from 9 different countries to oversee our work and some 180 affiliates around the world, including Oxford CND and Oxfordshire Peace Campaign.

Thank you for your continued support and for highlighting what goes on here at Croughton which is a vital hub for supporting global military operations such as drone strikes and the processing of military communications in Europe to support NATO and U.S. military commands.

The announcement of this demonstration during Keep Space for Peace Week is nearly always the first to be received and I remember really well the excellent Global Network conference you hosted in June 2018.

So, in 1999 the United Nations General Assembly declared that this week in October every year would be designated as ‘*World Space Week*’ to “*celebrate the contributions of space science and technology to the betterment of the human condition*” – and the Global Network asks that people recognise this as a time to “*Keep Space for Peace*”.

Each year the GN provides a poster to highlight the Week of Actions and this year the poster highlights Donald Trump’s ‘Golden Dome’ project.

Although this idea for a missile defence system to protect the US from ballistic, cruise and hypersonic missile attack from anywhere in the world is unlikely to be achievable, it is already causing international apprehension for its destabilising effect on international security.

The idea of a shield to protect the US from ballistic missile attack was first proposed by Ronald Reagan in 1983, as his “Strategic Defence Initiative”, or SDI, which became known as Star Wars by those who saw the technological goals as unrealistic and more like science fiction.

SDI was the U.S. moving away from mutual deterrence with the Soviet Union to enable a U.S. nuclear first strike with little or no risk of retaliation. The U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty with the Soviet Union in 2002 in order to build and deploy a limited number of ground-based interceptor missiles.

The US also established important components for their national missile defence system here in the UK, including the powerful missile tracking and targeting radar at Fylingdales and the down link station at Menwith Hill - both US bases in North Yorkshire.

As a crucial communications base Croughton is also going to be involved in the network of data gathering, command and control functions for U.S. missile defence and space warfighting.

The idea of a system that could defend against an all-out nuclear attack was soon abandoned as unworkable and instead the cut-down system was said to protect against a very limited attack by terrorists or so-called rogue states rather than the Soviet Union.

Even then it was not clear that it would work reliably.

Networks of hundreds of satellites for early warning, tracking and targeting of ballistic and hypersonic missiles will be needed to form the Golden Dome’s space-based sensor system.

Space-based interceptors had been proposed in SDI but were not developed because of cost and technical difficulties. They are however, planned for the Golden Dome – and if, as Trump says, the system is to be able to intercept missiles launched from anywhere on Earth, then thousands of space-based interceptors will have to be placed in Low Earth Orbit.

Russia and China have issued a joint statement warning about upsetting the global balance and condemning the US for the plan to place interceptors in orbit.

It is estimated that the proposed system would cost well over \$550 billion or even trillions of dollars - but, like SDI, it will probably, even then never be fully implemented.

The Golden Dome is therefore a colossally expensive and destabilising project with the only winners being the aerospace corporations who are already looking for their share of this boondoggle.

Lockheed Martin has also officially proposed a comprehensive missile defence system for the UK, submitting a detailed proposal to the government in June.

But no defence system is totally effective, and Israel's Iron Dome, believed to be effective in intercepting short-range missiles fired by Hamas, and the possible inspiration for the Golden Dome, could not cope with large numbers and many missiles got through. It was also swamped and tricked by the barrage of missiles and drones from Iran.

So, missile defence systems are extremely expensive, ineffective and accelerate an already dangerous arms race in outer space.

I guess we should be familiar with Donald Trump's extraordinarily confused thinking but he spent months campaigning for a Nobel Peace Prize and at the same time, wants to change the name of the *Department of Defence* to the *Department of War*. And, as wars cannot be fought these days without significant support from space systems, the US Space Force's *Space Operations Command* is also being renamed - as "*Combat Forces Command*."

The U.S. and U.K. have stated that they see space as another battleground and a recent U.S. Space Force publication '*Space Warfighting: A Framework for Planners*', outlines how it sees "space superiority as a necessary condition for military success" and it includes a strategic framework for space warfare.

The UK works closely with the U.S. on military space issues. A number of joint military space projects are already underway, and UK Space Command is conducting space warfare simulation exercises and is participating in the US '*Space Domain Awareness*' programme.

Space Domain Awareness involves the detection, tracking, and categorising of all activity within the space domain. Data is collected from satellites and ground-based

telescopes and radars and combined with intelligence sources to produce a picture of the space environment.

The proposed *Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability*, or DARC, to be sited at a National Park beauty spot in Pembrokeshire would be an important enhancement for this.

DARC would not only monitor the activities of others in space but could also provide data for the targeting of anti-satellite systems and therefore play a significant role in Space Battle Management.

However, there is always resistance and the campaign against DARC in Pembrokeshire is working brilliantly to stop any further developments.

Whatever plans the U.S. develops for space warfare, there will be U.S. bases in the U.K., like Croughton, that will be involved, making them targets in the event of a U.S. war.

I'm sure that Peter Burt will outline some of the other space issues facing us in the UK – including the development of space ports that will be used for military space launches and the protest at MoD Corsham planned for next Sunday.

These demonstrations and protests are so important - we cannot let these developments happen without them being challenged.

As the Keep Space for Peace Week poster says: *"is space as a war-fighting domain the reality we want to build out future on? Instead of weapons in space for a Golden Dome we should be leading the effort to ban weapons and warfare in space."*

Thank you for being here today - you are not alone - there are other protests, gatherings, demonstrations and actions in the England, Scotland, Wales, the U.S., South Korea, Japan and elsewhere during this week and the months to come.

The theme for UN '*World Space Week*' is "*Living in Space*", encouraging life off the planet, but how much more important is it that we work to '*Live in Peace*' on Earth?

Thanks again for what you do to make sure we do.