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CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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Nuclear bomb store at Lakenheath

The clearest indication yet that US nuclear weapons are about to be returned to Britain has emerged in an obscure report about a planned building project at RAF Lakenheath.

A \$50million allocation of funding for a dormitory at the Suffolk airbase was recently reported to the US Congress. The 144-bed building was described as required to “house the increase in listed personnel as the result of a potential surety mission.”

A “surety mission”, explained *The Guardian*, was Pentagon-speak for the handling of nuclear weapons. Construction of the new dormitory was scheduled for June 2024 ending in February 2026.

Buzzword

The tip-off about these latest American plans – there has been no announcement from either American or British official sources – came from Federation of American Scientists (FAS) member Matt Korda. He is reported as saying: “The mention of the arrival of the potential surety mission caught my eye as that is a buzzword, a term commonly used

in the defence department and the nuclear weapons complex to refer to the positive control of nuclear weapons in a safe and secure way.”

This follows an earlier FAS report that in the UK’s 2023 defence budget Britain had been added to the list of countries where infrastructure investment was underway on “special weapons” storage sites in Europe, alongside Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

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On the buses – not!

Bus adverts calling on major political parties to rethink their stance on nuclear weapons have not been appearing, as planned for buses in Bournemouth, Manchester and Liverpool to coincide with the Lib Dem, Tory and Labour party conferences. At the last moment the bus companies concerned refused to accept the ads paid for by CND members and branches. National CND responded by booking advertising vans to cruise round the cities instead!



KPC volunteers had a successful day at Carshalton EcoFair on late August bank holiday raising more than £400 for funds.

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Nuclear bomb store at Lakenheath

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The scientists conjecture that there are some 100 nuclear bombs already stored in these countries. Such munitions were removed from the UK in 2017 and the threat of their return has prompted CND, Stop the War, MAW and other groups to protest outside Lakenheath.

CND general secretary Kate Hudson, said: “It’s becoming increasingly clear that Lakenheath is once again a vital cog in Washington’s overseas nuclear machine – despite refusals from the British government to acknowledge this reality.” She said nuclear weapons’ presence would make the UK a more likely target in any nuclear war.

Also, reported the *Daily Telegraph* in late August, two squadrons of US F-35A aircraft – capable of carrying nuclear bombs – are due to be stationed at Lakenheath this year.

Cold War mentality

The build-up of nuclear munition stores in the UK and other countries is a clear indication of a return to Cold War mentality – exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine but also, quite separately, by NATO’s determination to characterise China as a future aggressor.

The potential return of US nuclear weapons to British soil has been described by experts as evidence that the West has entered a new cold war.

Commenting in the *Telegraph*, Former commander of NATO’s Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Regiment, Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, said: “This is absolutely a cold war and is strategic brinkmanship. This is a game of poker. If the US is putting nukes in the UK, it’s a message to Russia that they are serious.”

MoD in the red – again!

Over-running and over-budget are problems with which the MoD is well acquainted but the issue is being exacerbated by a major shortage of skills and experience, reports *Private Eye* in its August editions. Three substantial projects – two for new missiles and one to develop a new fighter aircraft – were moved into a ‘red’ classification meaning that successful delivery now looked unachievable.

Silver lining?

Other projects – one for armoured personnel carriers, another involving Chinook helicopters – were also downgraded from ‘green’ to ‘amber’. But, there is one silver lining, reports the *Eye*, “the much-maligned Ajax armoured vehicle” has been upgraded from ‘red’ to ‘amber’. This is the vehicle where internal vibrations and noise rendered its occupants deaf and disorientated. The vehicle will now be delivered on time. However, points out the *Eye*, that this is “on time” to a revised deadline that was extended by five years to 2031. And the cost has risen from £5.5bn to almost £7bn.

The issue of overruns and budget hikes does not, however, seem to prevent senior ministry officials from continuing to enhance their job prospects. A former senior director of the (‘red’ classified – see above) Tempest new fighter programme has now joined BAE Systems where he will be providing advice on the, you guessed it, Tempest fighter programme.

Another senior military official from the Faslane nuclear submarine base has become defence and nuclear director at Costain, the construction company with many defence contracts, including nuclear submarine sites.

STOP PRESS:

The so-called Future Combat Air System programme to develop the Tempest front line fighter aircraft – planned to supersede the Typhoon – and which is supposed to be in service in 2035, is a joint effort involving Sweden and Italy but, controversially, the UK would also like Saudi Arabia to get involved. Comments *Private Eye*: “The government wants to sign up Saudi Arabia as an investment partner in Tempest, rather than merely cashing in by selling the Saudis some jets later on ... any Tempest deal would tie UK foreign policy even closer to the Gulf dictatorship.”

The Saudis are making a concerted effort to assert their presence in international matters on other fronts too. See Ukraine peace moves (Page 3) and Middle East peace (Page 4). (Perhaps a peaceful settlement in Yemen should be at the top of the Saudis’ ‘must do’ in-tray -Ed.)

Ukraine: arms sales profits rise faster than peace hopes

While the situation on the ground in Ukraine has become ever more confused warmongers have been making the most of developments at the London arms fair while elsewhere tentative peace discussions have been underway.

The much-vaunted spring/summer counter offensive by Ukraine against the Russian invaders seems to have ground to a halt in places taking on the image of WWI's Western Front with miles and miles of trenches, mines and barbed wire. Meanwhile, arms customers at the biennial DSEI arms fair in London docklands were treated to pep talks from Britain's most senior military personnel, backed up by jingoistic reports from *The Daily Telegraph*.

As to potential peace initiatives the perhaps unlikely instigator on this occasion has been Saudi Arabia which appears bent on creating a reputation as a new force for diplomacy on the world stage. At the beginning of August the Arab kingdom hosted a meeting in Jeddah attended by representatives of 40 countries including the US, China and India, but not Russia. The two-day meeting was described as positive and there was said to be: "agreement that respect of territorial integrity and (the) sovereignty of Ukraine needs to be at the heart of any peace settlement".

China's involvement was seen as important given previous critical comments by the US and the UK about President Xi's steadfast reluctance to criticise Putin. The Chinese meanwhile clarified that their participation at Jeddah was a willingness to listen rather than an indication of future agreement over what to do about the Ukraine War.

Pave the way

Kyiv meanwhile hopes the meeting will pave the way for more meaningful future discussions between national leaders.

The situation in Ukraine itself was appearing bogged down in places with Kiyv only able to achieve modest gains thus far during its much-vaunted 2023 offensive. Meanwhile much has been made in the Western media of drone and missile attacks launched against Russian military bases in Crimea.

An article on *CNBC* cable news suggested that, given Russian forces in the south east of Ukraine had created a 600-mile front line of extensive



Deliveries to the DSEI exhibition were disrupted by protesters. Picture: Campaign Against Arms Trade.

fortifications, in some places 19 miles in depth, the war could drag on for at least two more years, with Ukraine hoping to receive \$100 billion in military aid a year from its Western/NATO supporters.

Exhibitors and customers at the DSEI event (outside of which peace campaigners protested volubly) were, however, clearly hoping to snap up some of that predicted \$100 billion. They were also treated to a visit by the UK's most senior military officer, Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, who gave a pep talk to delegates in which he claimed that Ukraine was taking the initiative over Russia. Meanwhile, it was no coincidence that, while the arms fair took place *The Daily Telegraph* was triumphally reporting that "British-supplied Storm Shadow cruise missiles were the key element of a highly sophisticated Ukrainian air and sea attack ... against Crimea." No doubt free copies of that morning's edition were liberally available to delegates.

But not everyone shares the obvious euphoria going around. In the *CNBC* article Jamie Shea, a former senior NATO official, was quoted saying: "I think the danger for Ukrainians is they really do end up with a stalemate, where they've gained very, very little territory, where a lot of the equipment supplied by the West has been written off with Ukrainians having suffered very significant casualties".

Another senior British military commentator General Richard Barrons said a possible outcome was that, as happened in lots of wars "... they just arrive at a grudging stalemate and you then glare at each other for a generation." Not that the arms merchants would mind. \$100billion a year for a generation, that's HOW MUCH?

UK tries to block court from calling Israel to account

The UK, ever supportive of Israel's right-wing governments, is now attempting to prevent the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague from investigating breaches of humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The ICJ has been tasked by the UN General Assembly to provide an advisory opinion on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory".

Britain has joined the US and Germany in opposing this move and has issued a statement that makes a number of claims that have immediately been rubbished by legal experts and commentators.

The UK claims that an ICJ's advisory opinion would settle Israel's "bilateral dispute" over Palestine without Israel's consent. Also, that the ICJ was "not equipped" to examine the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory".

The UK Foreign Office goes on to suggest that an advisory opinion would conflict with existing arrangements between the parties and negotiation frameworks endorsed by the UN and that the UN's request to the ICJ is "not appropriate as it asks the court to assume unlawful conduct on the part of Israel".

Weak and uninformed

Commenting in *The Guardian* Dr Victor Kattan from the University of Nottingham said the UK's statement was a "rather weak and uninformed document that portrays Israel's longstanding occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and its annexation of East Jerusalem, as a bilateral dispute between two states". Also, the UN General Assembly did not require Israel's consent before referring a request to the court.

In a telling comment Daniel Machover of London solicitors Hickman and Rose, said: "It is a matter of concern that the UK is seeking to block the court from addressing such important matters, something I am sure it would not do were the court asked to address comparable issues ... such as Russia's occupation of Ukrainian territory."

An issue that had spurred on the UN's request to the ICJ had been the decision, by what is widely accepted to be the most right-wing government in Israel's history, to transfer several aspects of the administration of the West Bank from military control to a pro-settlements civilian minister. This is seen by pro-Palestinian rights groups as amounting to a *de jure* annexation.

The UK's objection to the ICJ's involvement makes no mention of the dire political situation in Israel or Palestine or of the fact that Israel repeatedly fails to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people and continually ignores UN resolutions.

Israel has, of course, attacked the calls for the latest ICJ investigation claiming it delegitimises Israel.

Member nations of the UN General Assembly have until October 25 to comment on the statements issued by the UK and others on the referral to the ICJ. Assuming the court proceeds, its investigation is likely to take a year. The findings of the court are binding but it is not up to the court to enforce them.

(see also *Same old blah,blah,blah*, Page 8)

Arab moves on peace

Another of Saudi Arabia's initiatives to have a voice on the world stage involves a three-way agreement with the US and Israel that would include some accommodation for the demands of the Palestinians.

The *BBC* reported early last month on meetings between various parties taking place in Jeddah and Amman, Jordan. The Palestinian Authority (PA) delegates, who met with Saudi representatives in Jeddah, pushed for control of parts of the West Bank currently occupied by Israeli armed forces; a complete cessation of Israeli settlement growth in the West Bank; a resumption of Saudi financial support for the PA (which stopped three years ago); reopening of a US diplomatic mission to the Palestinians in Jerusalem (it was shut down by President Trump); and a resumption of the US-brokered

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The German city of Cologne has a 52-acre park dedicated to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Although named for the Japanese cities obliterated by US atomic bombs in 1945 the park is even more poignant than that. The hills in the parkland were created using rubble from the city of Cologne following its destruction by British and US bombers in WWII.

Starting in May 1940, and continuing until the end of the war, Cologne was bombed on 262 occasions, killing an estimated 20,000 inhabitants. Today, the Hiroshima-Nagasaki park provides a peaceful setting to contemplate the horrors of war.

The commemoration stone (pictured), surmounted by an image of a paper crane, bears the inscription *atomwaffen abschaffen* (abolish nuclear weapons)

Image licensable through Wikipedia Creative Commons [Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International](#) license. Geolina 123

Let's talk numbers!

Last month's DSEI arms fair in London Docklands – the world's biggest such event - featured more than **1500** exhibitors and **40,000** visitors. One exhibitor, Caterpillar - self-described as “the world's foremost supplier of earthmoving equipment ... for military forces” - boasted, according to *Byline Times*, that it had supplied Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Columbia, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Mali, Saudi Arabia and Somalia. All **nine** countries feature on the UK Government's list of nations where there are ‘concerns’ about human rights abuses.

An exhibition spokesman said “the invasion of Ukraine by Russia certainly has given DSEI a real focus”. Something that was completely absent, notes *Byline Times*, was any focus on the casualties caused by the weapons, munitions and technologies on display.

In late August the *New York Times* reported that US officials estimated that troop deaths and injuries suffered by Ukraine and Russia together are approaching **half a million**. Of this total some **300,000** are on the Russian side. The point was made that Russia always underplays its casualty figures while the Ukrainians remain tight-lipped. The estimated figures do not include civilians. Over the past decade when explosive weapons were used in populated areas worldwide **90%** of those killed or injured were civilians.

The Trial of Julian Assange

The Trial of Julian Assange is a meticulously researched and persuasively argued account of the systematic and deliberate persecution of an innocent man by three states jumping to the tune of a fourth.

The book's author is Nils Melzer, a United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, a Swiss professor who has served as legal advisor to the International Committee of the Red Cross and senior security policy advisor to the Swiss Government. In other words, he knows of what he writes in this harrowing account.

He charges the US, UK, Swedish and Ecuadorian governments with political persecution and gross judicial arbitrariness as well as deliberate torture and ill-treatment of Assange. The US, being the country whose war crimes in Afghanistan Assange revealed through Wikileaks, the UK for abandoning the rule of law in order to do the Americans' bidding, the Swedes for perpetuating a rape accusation against Assange for nine years until finally dropping it through lack of evidence, and the Ecuadorians who, after a change in government, turned Assange's sanctuary in their London embassy into a de facto detention where his every move and conversation was dutifully reported back to US Intelligence. The author also has harsh words for the Australian authorities which, he points out, have continually shown no intention to speak up for or support their countryman.

Subordinated to the US

There are many telling passages in this detailed account: there is then Foreign Office Minister Alan Duncan's comment: "Everything we believe in is ultimately subordinated to our not wanting to clash with the US"; the fact that Wikileaks was established in Sweden as a "constitutionally protected publisher" that would put the Swedish Government's transatlantic relations "under considerable strain".

Melzer sums up his copiously researched and evidenced findings thus: "In my assessment, in terms of legal process and the enormous socio-political risks associated with it, the trial of Julian Assange may well prove to be the biggest judicial scandal of our times. The merciless persecution that this man has been exposed to, and the shameless betrayal of justice and human rights demonstrated

by all the governments involved are beyond disgraceful – they profoundly undermine the credibility, integrity and sustainability of Western democracy and the rule of law."

Read this book. It will make you angry, but read it nonetheless.

The Trial of Julian Assange – A Story of Persecution.
Nils Melzer. Verso

Call for AUKUS Expansion

As the war in Ukraine grinds on (or in certain places grinds to a halt) the potential for conflict further east continues.

News came last month that UK MPs were actively pushing for both Japan and South Korea to be allowed to join the AUKUS pact set up by the US and Britain to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines to intimidate China.

The Conservative-led Commons Foreign Affairs Committee issued a report commenting that AUKUS was: "not purely about Australia acquiring a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines".

Really? That was what we were told at the time but apparently it also now includes cyber and advanced technology sharing, AI, undersea technologies and submarine detection.

The MPs also added a proposal for the UK to join the so-called Quad, a diplomatic initiative that brings together Australia, India, Japan and the US. Beijing views both AUKUS and the Quad as anti-China groups created as part of a new cold war focussed on the far east. North Korea has taken a much more belligerent view of the activities of the West towards its region.

The country announced in August that the test firing of two ballistic missiles was to simulate a nuclear strike against military targets in South Korea. The launches co-incided with US-South Korean military exercises. The drills included the flying of at least one American strategic heavy bomber over the Korean Peninsula.

The North Korean government said its missile tests were a warning against the US deployment of strategic bombers in the region. You can judge who began the endless cycle of provocations following a war which has never officially ended since an armistice was agreed in 1953.

Christian CND Conference

On 9 September Martin Birdseye and I travelled from West London all the way to Liverpool for a day trip to take in the Christian CND (CCND) annual general meeting. As here in London it was one of the hottest September days on record it was nice to be 'up north' and on the coast.

The event was hosted by the L3 church, a Pentecostal church making use of an old office building. Though the business of agm was in itself not of particular interest to the outsider one particular bit of any other business might be noteworthy; namely a proposal to turn Christian CND into a charity. At the moment as an unincorporated body the members of the committee have considerable and ambiguous liabilities concerning the organisation's work, and employment of staff. Also they have to constitutionally seek re-election each year which when taken together with the previous sentence makes planning awkward. It was stressed that, in the opinion of the committee, by becoming a charity they would not be prevented from continuing their campaigning work. Accordingly, the motion was passed.

The rest of the day was spent networking and having discussions about how sad it is that the Liverpool area now has only three branches of CND and despite their best efforts they are finding it hard to get students and young people involved. Members of Christian CND present felt that it was important that they should support their local branches, despite none present being from the Merseyside region, and through our contacts in other church organisations to try and link Christians involved with them to encourage more support for CND

William Rhind



KPC marked the UN International Day of Peace with its peace tree in Kingston Market Place, after which it was moved into the parish church bearing its messages from passers-by.

Talk nuclear but not peace!

British officials have been keeping channels of communication open with Russia during the Ukraine War to discuss issues of nuclear safety, but not peace.

This was the revelation that featured in the 'i' newspaper recently.

The meetings have taken place during the past 18 months because it was "crucial to maintain an open dialogue during the war in Ukraine," said a source but a Foreign Office spokesperson emphasised that any suggestion that the talks amounted to an attempt to end the war were 'neither credible nor accurate.'

In the same edition came the information that the US, Russia and China were all undertaking work at their various nuclear weapons test sites, building roads, storage facilities and other improvements.

Were the three powers planning to resume nuclear weapons testing, asks the Washington-based Centre for Non-proliferation Studies.

This information suggests that someone should be getting peace in Ukraine on the agenda without delay.

Arab moves on peace

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negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians from where they stopped under then-Secretary of State John Kerry in 2014.

For their part the Saudis would recognise the existence of the State of Israel – this would be perceived as a foreign policy achievement by the Biden administration – and in return the US would supply Saudi Arabia with more weaponry and, most contentiously, a civil nuclear programme including uranium enrichment facilities.

Implacable

For this to happen the Israeli Netanyahu-led government would have to abandon previous hostility towards its most implacable Arab neighbour, and the Saudis' de-facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman would have to modify his previous staunch support of the Palestinian cause. Commentators say that for a deal to succeed it would have to be seen to involve significant Israeli concessions to the Palestinians.

Biden would also have to demonstrate to the US Democratic party that the Palestinians were not being sidelined in order to achieve an agreement. Very much a case of watch this space.

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Our regular stall in Kingston
Market Place is held on the
first and third Saturday of
each month. If you wish to
help please contact Angie
Cooper on 0208 399 5537 or
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Dates for your Diary

October 2023

Thursday 12th October

Working for Peace: approaches to reducing the threat of nuclear war. Lecture by Paul Ingram, Senior Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk at the University of Cambridge. 7pm to 8.30pm. Free entry, doors open 6.30pm for light refreshments. Kingston Quaker Centre, Fairfield East, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2PT

Tuesday 17th October

Investigative journalist Asa Winstanley speaks about his new book *Weaponising Anti-Semitism – How the Israel lobby brought down Jeremy Corbyn*. Organised by West Surrey PSC. 7.30pm. Godalming Quaker Meeting House, The Mint, Godalming GU7 1HB. Contact: info@westsurreypsc.org.uk

Wednesday 18th October

Responsible Science and the Polycrisis. Scientists for Global Responsibility conference. Online. 4pm to 6pm. Free. Discussion on new hope versus false solutions. Speakers include: Prof Paul Rogers, Prof Lorraine Whitmarsh, Dr Stuart Parkinson, Dr Beth Stratford.

Contact: <https://www.sgr.org.uk/events/responsible-science-and-polycrisis-new-hope-versus...> for further details plus Eventbrite sign up.

Thursday 19th October

Are we already in World War III? Uniting for Peace Annual Conference. Online. 6pm – 8pm. Free. Can a roadmap for peace change the culture of war to a culture of peace? Chaired by Rita Payne, Commonwealth Journalists Association. Speakers include Vijay Mehta, Uniting for Peace UK and Joseph Gerson, President, Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security (USA), Alfred de Zayas, expert in human rights and international law (Switzerland), Medea Benjamin, Co-founder of Code Pink (USA). Contact: <https://unitingforpeace.com/general/ufp-annual-conference-are-we-already-in-world-war-iii>

Tuesday 26th and Wednesday 27th October

The Mistake. Award-winning play written by and starring Michael Mears on the events surrounding the catastrophic mistake – the bombing of Hiroshima – that launched the nuclear age. 7.30pm both nights. Sands Films Studios, St Marychurch Street, Rotherhithe. SE16 4HZ. Instead of fixed price tickets, performances are supported by donations: the venue suggests £7.50. For more information, including booking to watch the performance online: <https://www.sandsfilms.co.uk/sands-films-music-room.html>

Thursday 28th October

CND Policy Conference 2023. The conference this year will take place in Manchester, with CND members also able to join in the debate online. The live event takes place at Methodist Central Hall Oldham Street Manchester UK M1 1JQ. Individual registration fee is £12. Contact: <https://cnduk.org/about/cnd-conference/conference-2023/policy-conference-2023-individual-registration/>

Same old blah, blah, blah!

We reported in the last edition that no response had yet been received from Twickenham MP Munira Wilson to the letter KPC sent to her about Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes and schools plus the lack of humanitarian aid for Palestinian detainees. Our letter was apparently sent on to Foreign Office Minister Lord Ahmad and his reply has now been passed to us, without comment, by Ms Wilson's office. It lists all the things the Foreign Office raises concerns about with the Israeli government who of course then completely ignore them with impunity. So, no further forward on these issues.