



# OXFORD CND

## NEWSLETTER

May/June 2022



# NO to WAR in UKRAINE



**Stop the War  
coalition**

**Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament**

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# Drumming for Peace

Of course, we all want the war in Ukraine, with its appalling destruction and human cost, to end as soon as possible. Or do we? A disturbing and dangerous verbal escalation in recent days suggests a rather different perspective. There is now constant talk of being in the war “for the long haul” (UK Foreign Secretary) and of seeking to “weaken Russia” (US Defence Secretary), while “defence” strategists tell the BBC that this shift in mood reflects a new judgement that Russia is “losing the war”. Meanwhile Boris Johnson says airily that the war is likely to continue “to the end of next year” (a prediction that no responsible forecaster could make).

Our deep concern over this trend should not

be misused to exculpate the Russian invasion in any way. It has been judged to be an act of aggression, in violation of the UN Charter, by 141 members, or 73 percent of the total membership. Abstention means that the 35 who did abstain neither assented nor opposed the resolution passed on 2 March. And just five members voted against - 2.6 percent of the membership. For all who accept the authority of the UN (and that includes, in their public statements, both Russia and China) this is an overwhelming verdict. It means that every action by every Russian tank, artillery gun, plane or individual soldier is part of an aggressive war. While we rightly deplore the consequent violations of international humanitarian law, to the point of war crimes, we should never lose sight of this fundamental starting-point.

We can understand that the Ukrainian government and a large portion of its people wish to fight on, encouraged by Russia’s military failures so far to believe that they can carry on until victory. At least, it makes sense from the perspective of maintaining morale for President Zelensky to say so – although not so long ago he was talking about a negotiated settlement in which some concessions would be discussed.

But Ukraine’s allies are obliged to take a cool view of the situation and offer, at least privately, the best possible advice to Zelensky. For reasons of prudence

if none other, they should avoid bombastic statements that will serve to provide justification for the Russian narrative that this is a proxy war by NATO threatening Russian territory.

Beating the war drums from a safe distance is particularly disturbing, because it distracts attention from any further effort within the UN to bring about a ceasefire. In the last week of April, it has masked a failure to support properly the mission of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to Moscow and Kiev. While he is unlikely to have achieved any tangible result, it is a start - and an overdue one. It comes after Guterres received a letter from some two hundred former senior UN officials, urging him

to make more effort.

*“We therefore implore you to intensify your personal efforts... for the cessation of hostilities and conflict resolution through peaceful means. This is the raison d’être of the United Nations, which is being tested again in this case. We are horrified at the alternative, the UN becoming increasingly irrelevant...”*

Under Article 24 of the Charter. Britain as a member of the Security Council shares the Council’s “primary

responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security”. As a permanent member Britain has an even higher responsibility, and Liz Truss in her role as UK Foreign Secretary should be voicing and emphasizing Britain’s commitment to this primary task.

The UN has generally had a low profile in Britain, unlike the League of Nations which attracted mass support between the wars. The United Nations Association (UNA-UK) has not been in the habit of taking strong positions, appearing at times anxious to avoid giving offence. Fortunately, it now has a new Chief Executive Officer, Marissa Conway, who has a notable activist background, and it has just reduced its annual membership fee to a token £10. To raise its voice as it should be doing requires wider backing, and I urge anyone reading this who is not yet a member to sign up, and help press the government to work for peace through the UN. ■

**John Gittings**



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# AWE Burghfield leaves 'special measures' after eight years

At the beginning of April, the Office for Nuclear Regulation announced that the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) site at Burghfield has moved out of enhanced regulatory attention. Regulatory performance at the site, which has been subject to this category of regulation almost continually since November 2013, has been improving faster in recent years than at AWE Aldermaston, which remains under enhanced attention.

While both AWE sites were placed into special regulatory attention in 2013, Burghfield was returned to normal regulatory attention in 2015, before returning to enhanced attention the following year. For several years the sites have put in place a structured improvement in order to return to normal regulation. The plan covers areas such as the management of safety cases, streamlining of documentation and resolving key issues. However, hopes that AWE would return to routine regulation in 2020 were dashed following an inspection in 2019, and in November 2020 the Chief Nuclear Inspector said the change would not occur before 2022.

In March 2018 ONR withheld approval from a 10-year Periodic Safety Review (PSR) for Burghfield and said that operations in the Assembly Technology Centre, where nuclear warheads are assembled and disassembled, might have to cease if safety improvements were not made. Safety concerns had previously halted work there in 2007 and 2008. During the process of ONR reviewing the PSR AWE failed to provide necessary documents on time

and this was part of a wider pattern of delays in providing safety documentation. In 2020 ONR sent an enforcement letter to AWE over an 18-month delay in delivering a PSR for Aldermaston, and the issue was cited as one reason why the two sites did not return to routine regulation that year.

In July 2021 AWE returned to public ownership, ending 28 years of the site being run under a government-owned contractor-operated model. NIS understands that, alongside a desire to save money and exercise a greater level of control as the UK begins its Replacement Warhead Project, concerns about AWE's regulatory performance was one of the motivating factors. The renationalisation involved a number of changes at board level, but most of the senior leadership team remain in place. NIS understands that prior to the appointment of current chief executive Alison Atkinson in May 2020, AWE was unwilling to increase the organisation's capacity to work on regulatory issues such as safety cases.

A major area of work at Burghfield is the troubled project to construct a replacement warhead assembly and disassembly facility, known as Mensa. This project was approved in 2011 and until recently was known to be delayed by six years with an estimated cost of £1.8bn, more than a billion pounds over its initial budget. In February the government announced that due to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and changes related to the Replacement Warhead Project, Mensa has been delayed by a further year to 2024 and is now estimated to cost nearly £2bn.

ONR's decision to move Burghfield into normally regulatory attention appears to be the consequence of a review held at the end of 2021. The most recent Chief Nuclear Inspector's report stated that this review would take place due to the improvements at the site. The regulatory areas the report cited as having improved included regulatory compliance, plant control, industrial and fire safety, risk at the site, safety case adequacy and leadership. ■

**Nuclear Information Service**



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# New build nuclear power stations

Britain plans to build eight new nuclear reactors and expand production of wind energy as it seeks to reduce dependence on oil and natural gas from Russia and other foreign suppliers following the invasion of Ukraine. Boris Johnson announced the

plans as part of a new energy security strategy that will also accelerate development of solar power and hydrogen projects. The government said it wants to almost triple nuclear power generation capacity to 24 gigawatts by 2050. ■



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## Sizewell C subsidies

Does EDF really need even more subsidies for Sizewell C? Under new legislation, our normally parsimonious government has just earmarked a further £1.7 billion towards meeting their (uncosted) promise to ensure that another new nuclear fission power plant may possibly begin being built before the next election. By doing so, our beloved leaders are ensuring that Sizewell C will now have subsidised development, subsidised construction,

subsidised power production and subsidised waste management, for a project still being run by Europe's most subsidised company, Electricité de France. Free markets? Don't you believe it. ■

**Electrical Review 6th April 2022**

**<https://electricalreview.co.uk/2022/04/06/does-edf-really-need-even-more-subsidies-for-sizewell-c/>**

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## No Strategy for New Build Rad Waste

Poll results: Nuclear waste disposal. According to the UK's Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), the estimated cost of cleaning up the waste from 20th-century nuclear power plants currently stands at £131bn. What's more, this figure does not include the construction of a geological disposal facility (GDF), a vast underground storage space for waste which was first suggested nearly 50 years ago but which has yet to even find a viable location. This Poll was carried out between March 29-April 5, 2022 and received 360 votes. 67% said new nuclear should be rolled out as quickly as possible. According to

the NDA, the spent fuel from this coming generation of plants will not be cool enough to be moved to a GDF – if one is ever built – for 140 years, further adding to the UK's nuclear waste disposal problem. So not only is the UK struggling to deal with its existing waste on a mass scale, in seeking to meet its future energy demands and enable the net zero transition, it will create enormous amounts of high-level waste for which there is currently no strategy to deal with. ■

**The Engineer 5th April 2022**

**<https://www.theengineer.co.uk/content/news/poll-results-nuclear-waste-disposal>**

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# Nuclear submarines from three countries berthed at Faslane

French and American nuclear submarines have been pictured arriving at Faslane recently. The US Virginia class and French Rubis were spotted berthing the naval base at Faslane (HMNB Clyde) just north of Glasgow.

According to the editor of UK Defence Journal, George Allison, it's the first time that nuclear submarines belonging to three western nations were in the same place at the same time in recent memory, let alone a base so close to where Russian submarines typically operate in the North Atlantic.

Faslane is home to the UK's own nuclear deterrent, including the Trident nuclear missile-carrying Vanguard-class nuclear submarines. HM Naval Base Clyde – commonly known throughout the Navy as Faslane – is the Royal Navy's main presence in Scotland. It is home to the

core of the Submarine Service, including the nation's nuclear deterrent, and the new generation of hunter-killer submarines.

The Royal Naval Armaments Depot at Coulport, 8 miles from Faslane, is responsible for the storage, processing, maintenance and issue of key elements of the UK's Trident Deterrent Missile System and the ammunitioning of all submarine embarked weapons. ■



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## Arms Trade

CAAT condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine as an act of imperialist aggression. Russia's brutal onslaught on Ukraine's civilian population almost certainly involves war crimes. We extend our solidarity to the people of Ukraine, to everyone who is working for peace in Ukraine and Russia, and challenging this devastating war.

We urge the UK government to ensure that the protection of civilians is prioritised in their response

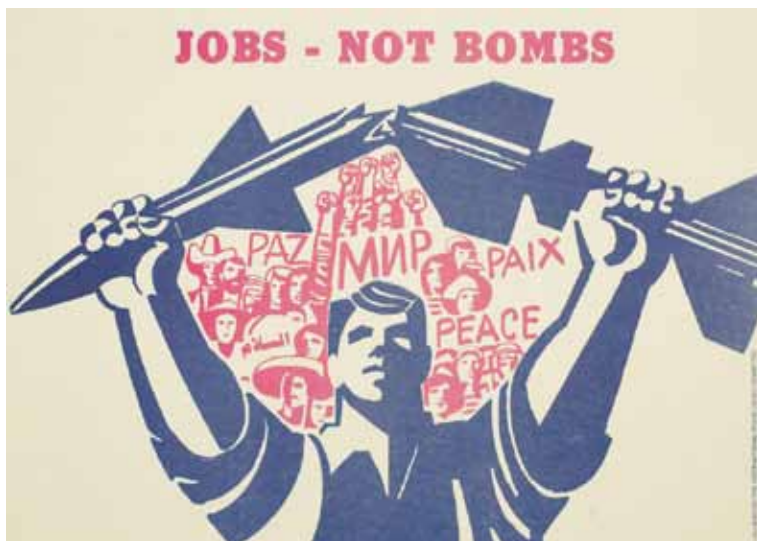
to this crisis, and we call for the visa requirements for Ukrainians fleeing the war, and for all refugees fleeing conflict, to be lifted. The concerted efforts to provide safety and shelter for refugees, and the outpouring of empathy from the public shows the government's 'hostile environment' towards refugees is not reflective of the people they represent.

Global arms dealers have seen a huge jump in their share prices since the war in Ukraine began, as European countries prepare to massively rearm, doubling down on the very militarism that has created so much death and suffering in Ukraine, and elsewhere. It is unconscionable that the horrific suffering of the Ukrainian people is a source of profit for European arms companies.

We think it is all the more important, with the justified focus on Ukraine and the horrific violence being inflicted on it by Russia, that the similar horrors being visited on Yemen by Saudi Arabia, in this case with active UK support, are not forgotten. ■

Extract from

**Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT)**



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# NUKEWATCH

On the 7th April a nuclear warhead convoy from AWE Burghfield travelled northbound through Oxfordshire passing Didcot, Abingdon, Oxford, Kidlington, Bicester and Banbury on the way to RNAD Coulport, next to the Faslane Trident nuclear submarine base in Scotland.

The convoy returned southbound through Oxfordshire again on the 12th April, and the photo shows a MOD Police escort control vehicle in the convoy passing Oxford on the A34.

This is the second nuclear warhead convoy this year to have travelled back and forth through Oxfordshire (tracked and monitored by local Oxford CND nukewatchers) and it is very disturbing that this traffic continues. The government has increased the number of nuclear warheads and this traffic will often travel through Oxfordshire. ■

This is the most-deadly cargo on our roads. If you see a convoy phone 0356 4588 364 with the details. ■



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## USAF Fairford

The last of the 4 US B52 strategic nuclear bombers that have been on exercise from USAF Fairford on the Oxfordshire / Gloucestershire border left for the US on Tuesday 19th April. They had been at Fairford



since 10th February.

There are 3-5 U2 intelligence gathering aircraft operating out of Fairford at the moment, presumably watching the Ukraine war. ■



*Above: U2 reconnaissance and intelligence gathering plane (with span pod).*

*Left: B52 nuclear capable strategic bomber.*

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# Lakenheath vaults upgraded

Military bunkers in the UK are being upgraded so they can be used to store US nuclear weapons again after 14 years of standing empty, according to US defence budget documents.

In the Biden administration's 2023 defense budget request, the UK was added to the list of countries where infrastructure investment is under way at "special weapons" storage sites, alongside Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey – all countries where the US stores an estimated 100 B61 nuclear bombs.

Hans Kristensen, the director of the nuclear information project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), said he believed the British site being upgraded is the US airbase at RAF Lakenheath, 100 km north-east of London.

The US withdrew its B61 munitions from Lakenheath in 2008, marking the end of more than half a century of maintaining a US nuclear stockpile in the UK. At the time of the withdrawal, the gravity bombs were widely seen as militarily obsolete and hopes were higher for further disarmament by the nuclear weapons powers.

That optimism has since been dashed, against the backdrop of Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, his regime's nuclear threats against NATO, and extensive nuclear weapon modernisation programmes pursued by both the US and Russia. As part of the US plan, the B61 has been given a new lease of life with a guidance system, the B61-12 variant, due to go into full production in May.

The 2023 budget request says that Nato "is wrapping up a 13-year, \$384m infrastructure investment program at storage sites in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, and Turkey to upgrade security measures, communication systems, and facilities".

In the 1990s, RAF Lakenheath had 33 underground storage vaults, where 110 B61 bombs were stored, according to the FAS. Since their withdrawal the vaults have been mothballed. Kristensen said he believes the vaults are now being upgraded so the new B61-12 bombs can be stored there, if needed.

When the new B61-12 bombs are delivered, expected next year, they will replace older models already there. Instead, it's thought the Lakenheath

upgrade is intended to provide more flexibility to move the nuclear weapons around Europe.

"One of the things they have talked about is protecting the deterrent against Russia's improved cruise missiles capabilities," Kristensen said. "So, they could be trying to beef up the readiness of more sites without them necessarily receiving nukes, so that they have the options to move things around in a contingency if they need to."

The UK Ministry of Defence did not comment on the upgrade mentioned in the US budget. One British official said: "We won't provide anything on this as it relates to the storage of nuclear weapons." But the news comes just four months after the arrival in Lakenheath of the first of a new generation



of nuclear-capable US combat aircraft, the F-35A Lightning II, the first such deployment in Europe.

The developments in Europe are part of a broader retreat from arms control. The Biden administration's nuclear posture review leaves open the option of using nuclear arms to respond to non-nuclear threats as well.

The nuclear disarmament group CND said the "quiet announcement" by the US amounted to more militarisation at a time of growing risk and would add to the risks faced by the British public. Kate Hudson, the general secretary of CND, said she feared it could lead to US warheads being redeployed in the UK. "Nuclear weapons don't make us safe – they make us a target," she added. "Despite Parliamentary CND's best efforts to hold the UK government to account, the MoD consistently sidesteps on the issue of nuclear weapons in the most disgraceful way. The people of this country deserve to know whether a foreign nation's nuclear stockpile is being warehoused on their doorstep." ■

**National CND demo – Saturday 21st May 2022  
1pm outside RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Suffolk, IP27 9BU**



## Diary

**MONTHLY ALL YEAR:** USAF Croughton main gate Quaker meeting 2-3pm (fourth Saturday of the month). Contact: **Elisabeth Salisbury** – **01865 515163**.

### May

**Wednesday 4th** – Faringdon Peace Group meeting – 7.30pm.

**13th-15th** – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp – **14th** – Workshop – the Use of Uranium and Plutonium. Speakers 1.30-4.00pm. Nuala 01865 749459.

**Tuesday 17th** – Abingdon Peace Group meeting – 8.00pm.

**Friday 20th** – Oxfordshire Peace Campaign meeting 5.00pm.

**Saturday 21st** – Oxford CND stall – Leveller's Day, Burford.

**Saturday 21st** – National CND demo. USAF Lakenheath. Brandon Road, IP27 9BU. 1.00pm.

### June

**Wednesday 1st** – Faringdon Peace Group meeting – 7.30pm.

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

**Saturday 11th** – CND 'Talks not Bombs' Day of Action.

**Tuesday 21st** – Abingdon Peace Group – 8.00pm

**Best list of news items, webinars etc:**  
[https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/news\\_items](https://www.cndsalisbury.org.uk/news_items)



## Latest News

### Military spending at record levels

Global military spending rose again in 2021, setting new records with global military spending rising by 0.7 percent according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri). Spending rose for the seventh consecutive time to reach **\$2.1 trillion** – the highest figure ever.

USA – **\$801 billion**  
China – **\$293 billion**  
India – **\$76.6 billion**  
UK – **\$68.4 billion**  
Russia – **\$65.9 billion**  
Saudi Arabia – **\$55.6 billion**

### Membership subscriptions 2022 Please pay your subscription soon!

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 2022 payable to Oxford CND and send to: Membership, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP.

### Oxford CND Newsletter by email

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### Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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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 **Saturday June 25th 2022**