

Report on National CND Council Meeting, 30.11.24

Nigel Day, from Oxford CND and Peter Gloyns, from Salisbury CND, represented the Southern Region at this meeting. The intention of this report is to give readers a flavour of what went on and to pass on the useful briefing documents made available to Council members. These covered the situations in Ukraine and NATO.

Sophie Bolt, the new General Secretary of CND, gave an overview of the current situation.

She stressed the serious escalation in Ukraine following the US and UK decisions to allow use of longer range missiles to be targeted within Russian territory. These missiles can only be targeted with direct US involvement. This continuing escalation is reckless. People in Ukraine want peace talks and the escalation is being driven by domestic US politics. CND's work is to get politicians to pull back.

Trump is pushing for increased spending within NATO. She highlighted the possibility that the US is considering restarting nuclear testing. There is increasing economic and military pressure on China.

B61-12 guided air launched nuclear bombs are coming to both Europe and Lakenheath. Turkey is not seen as a reliable NATO partner and this is a driver towards the US transferring part of their nuclear stockpile to Lakenheath. The Government is wedded to Trident renewal and has recently been one of the few countries to oppose a study on the effects of nuclear war.

The recent fire at a shipyard building nuclear submarines was discussed. It apparently burnt for 14 hours and involved damage to the submarines under construction.

Radioactive emissions have doubled from our nuclear submarine facilities in Scotland, and there has been an increase in release of radioactive water from these sites.

This is a critical time for CND. Our Government is contributing to escalation and the UK links with a US administration lead by Trump is increasingly unpopular.

The following documents may be of interest:

Nuclear disarmament: strengthening our campaigning links

The sharpening of international tensions – with the increasing risks of all-out war in the Middle East and between nuclear-armed NATO and Russia, and the ongoing threat of confrontation with China – is exposing more starkly the inter-connectedness between nuclear dangers, escalating war, economic crises, racism and climate chaos.

The inter-connectedness of these dangers – and the alliances needed to challenge them - was powerfully demonstrated at CND's 'The World We Want' conference in October, which brought together over 200 experts and activists to explore peace, nuclear disarmament, divestment and climate action, global economic justice and opposition to racism.

It is vital that we make the most of the opportunities presented by the conference and strengthen our campaigning links with climate action, divestment and global justice campaigns.

Britain's historic military and nuclear alliance with the US – enshrined in the MDA and NATO, is why it is escalating these international tensions and championing huge increases in defence spending. As well as continuing to challenge Britain's role, CND has an important responsibility to expose the dangers of the nuclear industry as well as its huge economic drain on public finances.

To this end, council resolves to:

- Organise a series of public webinars to develop these alliances around climate action, divestment and global justice campaigns, culminating in a public conference in October 2025
- Update our campaigning materials on the costs of Trident and its replacement
- Organise a 2025 national tour of nuclear and military bases across the country, including Barrow, Lakenheath, Devonport and Aldermaston, and liaise with Scottish CND to support actions at Faslane.

Update - dates for 2025 national tour:

- Barrow – Saturday 22 March
- Lakenheath – Saturday 26 April
- Devonport – June (date tbc)
- Aldermaston – TBC

Sophie Bolt

Ukraine War: A Test Bed For New Weapons Technologies

It is clear that Ukraine and Gaza are being used as test sites and as a shop window for new weapons technologies. The use of satellites, drones, cyberwarfare, AI systems, GPS and EMF (electromagnetic fields) blocking and spoofing are among the most commonly used techniques employed by all sides.

No war has seen both sides of a conflict use space and counterspace systems as much as in Ukraine. Satellites are deeply integrated into conventional warfare, and enable precision strikes, drone operations and missile warnings.

The primary military functions of satellites are Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR); Communication; and Positioning, Navigation, and Timing (PNT).

A new dimension has been the reliance on commercial satellite providers. For the first time information that previously was only available from government sources has been supplied by commercial companies. Ukraine has obtained satellite imagery and communications services from American, Canadian, and European companies. In the first 2 weeks of the war, Ukraine downloaded more than 40 million square kms' worth of geospatial imagery.

Ukraine has obtained satellite imagery and communications services from American, Canadian, and European companies who have provided optical images, synthetic-aperture radar images that see through cloud cover and at night, and radio-frequency data for detecting electronic emissions like GPS jamming and to locate and track Russian forces.

Ukraine is also being helped to defend against cyberattacks by the likes of Microsoft, Amazon, and Google and they have used commercial satellite communications services such as Starlink which is free for the Ukrainian military. Starlink has been used to carry out drone strikes and other military operations and has served as the backbone of the command-and-control software that Ukraine uses to share data, coordinate military operations, and communicate with US and NATO advisers outside the country.

However, Starlink satellite internet dishes use GPS which Russia has been able to successfully jam and Russia is also using Starlink terminals obtained from third parties, despite sanctions.

Starlink services are also being used in Gaza to assist Israel's horrific ongoing genocidal invasion. Some of the tactics and technologies used in Ukraine have also been seen and developed in Gaza, especially the use of drones.

The US and UK have flown surveillance flights over Gaza and information will undoubtedly have been passed on to the IDF. Similarly spy satellites will be used to monitor electronic communications and downlinked to Menwith Hill in North

Yorkshire from where they will be passed on to the Israeli forces. This information could then be used by AI-enabled decision-making systems used in Gaza known as “Gospel”, “Lavender” and “Where’s Daddy?”. These systems are trained to recognise features that characterise people associated with the military arm of Hamas. Features such as membership of the same WhatsApp group as known supporters, changing cell phones or addresses frequently.

The US and UK work closely on military space developments and a number of UK launch sites (mainly in Scotland) are being prepared which will be used by the military. The US also wants to station huge radar sites in Texas, Australia and Pembrokeshire as part of the AUKUS deal, to enable them to track satellites, target them and control space. Indications are that the UK will carry on helping them wherever and whenever possible.

Dave Webb, International Advisory Group - Information Paper

Ukraine escalation – CND’s response (information)



All of us are horrified by the rapid escalation taking place in Ukraine. This is a critical time for our campaign. It is absolutely vital that CND, at every level, mobilises public opposition in order to pressure our political leaders to step back from the nuclear brink.

This is why we have called an emergency day of action on Saturday 7 December. This is supported by Stop the War Coalition.

Already, events are being planned across the country, including in

London, Manchester and Plymouth.

Click [here](#) to see details.

All groups and members are being mobilised. Resources are available to help take action: graphics to share on social media, posters to download and print, and a lobby tool to write to MPs about the dangers of nuclear war.

All of this is available on the CND website [here](#).

Please can Council members do everything they can to promote this day of action, support and organise activities in your areas and regions.

Other initiatives:

On Wednesday, as the Ukraine-NATO council met, CND handed in a letter to the Prime Minister calling on the government to end its reckless escalation and withdraw the use of British Storm Shadow missiles. It calls for Britain to use its influence to support a ceasefire and peace negotiations.

Read our press release and letter [here](#).

Read our letter [published in The Guardian](#) signed by peace campaigners, MPs and trade unionists.

Sophie Bolt

1. IAG information paper - Ukraine: the path to peace

This paper is a shorter version of an introduction at the National Council discussion meeting of the same name, organised by the International Advisory Group and held on 14 November. It looks at some of the issues behind the war in Ukraine to encourage an informed discussion, to highlight some aspects western media and governments avoid telling us, and to give us confidence to speak out for de-escalation and a negotiated settlement might best be presented. As participants were members of National Council, I take for granted they will be familiar with possibilities of precipitating a wider war in Europe with the potential for a nuclear exchange.

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When Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February 2022, we were encouraged to believe it would be a short military campaign. With the end of its third year almost upon us, and with no resolution in sight, the prospects look very different. Donald Trump's presidential success indicates a change in the US approach to the war may be coming – he claims he 'can end it in 24 hours'! We have to keep a keen watch for changes in the President-elect's approach, and the personnel he nominates for key military and security positions as Trump prepares to enter the White House on 21 January.

BUILD-UP TO WAR

The failure of the Minsk Agreements of 2014 and 2015, which had sought to establish an end to military confrontation in the Donbas, are the immediate precursors of today's war, though tensions between Ukraine and Russia over the east and southeast of the Ukraine's present borders go back further.

It is widely believed the Biden administration had information about a potential invasion a year before it took place. US and Russian officials met in November 2021 to consider calling a summit, but failed to reach agreement.

President Putin wants ‘full and consistent compliance with the Minsk Agreements’. He accuses Ukraine and its allies of dismantling the Minsk process, and believes Ukraine is seeking to militarise the Donbas. This view emerges from Russian reports and sources, and is also reflected by more sober analysts in the west, for example a House of Commons Library Briefing in February 2022, immediately before the invasion.¹

★ **Putin’s goals**

In the early stages of the war, Russia targeted Kyiv and other western parts of the country, leading to speculation that Putin sought to conquer the whole of Ukraine and reincorporate it into a post-Soviet greater Russia. This debate continues. The course of the war, however, lends support to the view that Russia’s strategic objectives are three-fold:

1) preventing encirclement by Nato as bordering states join the Alliance

There are currently 33 Nato member states. Additionally, Nato works with more than 40 non-member partner states across the globe on a wide range of political and security-related issues. Russia *is* encircled by Nato members and Nato partners. Nato members are committed to providing military facilities for the Alliance.²

2) protecting Ukraine’s ethnic Russian population which is largely but not entirely in the east and southeast of Ukraine. This is a goal which Russian public opinion strongly supports.

3) access to the world’s oceans and seas

Russia is an almost landlocked country with a huge border. Russia access to the world’s oceans and seas is strategically important for military and trade security. Putin believes Russia’s access is increasingly threatened by the United States.

★ **Zelensky goals**

Zelensky wants full Nato membership and EU membership. To date, the Biden administration has not supported Nato membership, which would be seen as a huge escalation on the part of the Allies. Nato membership would include Ukraine

¹ Claire Mills, Ukraine: Russia's ‘red line’, House of Commons Library Research Briefing, 18 February 2022 at <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9401/CBP-9401.pdf>

² [Nato member countries](#), last updated: 11 Mar 2024. Full Nato members in East Europe include Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Albania, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania which border Russia. Nato partners with borders on Russia include Finland, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Russia’s near abroad – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – are also Nato partners.

providing Nato with access to territory and airspace – potentially facilitating a nuclear attack. No anti-missile defences exist that would enable Russia to withstand a nuclear attack from so close to its borders.

With the backing of Nato allies President Zelensky war aims are regaining every inch of territory held by Russia. This includes bringing Crimea under Ukrainian rule. Not even the US believes incorporating Crimea into the Ukraine is an achievable goal. Crimea has a distinctly different, Russian, history.

COURSE OF THE WAR

The speedy Ukrainian victory promised when the war began has not materialised, and for the past year or longer. The much-lauded counteroffensive which Ukraine began in June 2023 proved a failure. It is increasingly clear that a military stalemate exists.

On 7 August this year, with the permission of the US and Nato, Ukraine launched a ground offensive inside Russian territory for the first time, after the US and other Nato allies gave the go-ahead for weapons they've supplied to be used against military targets within Russia.³

Ukrainian forces penetrated 20 miles or more across the border into Russia's Kursk region, attacking bridges and pontoons and taking prisoners of war. By the end of the month, Tass News Agency reported over 122,000 Russian civilians had had to be evacuated. The area is largely uninhabited countryside, with little military significance.

In retaliation, Ukraine's second city Kharkiv came under heavy fire, and Russian troops captured surrounding villages in what is described as one of the most significant ground assaults of the war so far.⁴ At the same time, Russia has deepened its hold on the Donbass.

This has led to Zelensky's appeal to Biden, and to a tour of European ally countries, seeking support for the use of long-range missiles for another deeper and more significant incursion into Russian territory. To date the US and Britain, whose Storm Shadow missiles would likely be used in such an attack, has withheld permission for Ukraine to use long-range missiles.

Putin responded:⁵ 'If this decision is made it will mean nothing other than direct participation by NATO countries, the United States and European countries, in the

³ Abdujalil Abdurasulov, Will using Western weapons on Russia help Ukraine change the war? Reporting from Kyiv, 5BBC News, 1 June 2024 at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjll1r1el5wo>

⁴ Visual Journalism Team, Ukraine in maps: Tracking the war with Russia, BBC News, 22 August 2024 at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-60506682>

⁵ I'm quoting the English translation used by the BBC at the time.

war in Ukraine. And this of course changes the very essence of the conflict. This will mean that Nato countries – the United States, European countries – are fighting with Russia.’

A meeting between Biden and Starmer at the end of September resulted in an equally cautiously statement that ‘no permission had been granted’. Both of these statements were carefully crafted – in Russia’s case, to avoid suggesting a declaration of war; in the US-UK case, to leave open the possibility of long-range missile permission in future.

Putin has subsequently broadened Russia’s nuclear use strategy to include non-nuclear conflicts with nuclear armed states. For several years, the US and Britain have adopted strategies which include using nuclear weapons in non-nuclear conflicts which involve substantial security threats.

★ Britain’s role

Britain is the third biggest Ukraine donor after the US and Germany. However, US financial support could diminish with Trump in the White House; and the German governing coalition has collapsed, with the possibility of a change in support once Bundestag elections are held next year.

Britain – has supplied Challenger 2 tanks used in the Kursk offensive in August
– was the first country to sign a bi-lateral security agreement with Ukraine, in January this year,
– provided an extra £2,26 billion for Ukraine, in the budget last month.

BEHIND THE CURRENT TENSIONS

It is clear by now that the war in Ukraine has two aspects:

- a conflict between two warring states, Russia and Ukraine, over territory, and
- a proxy war between two nuclear armed powers, Russia and Nato.

If it were solely the former, Russia’s undoubted military superiority would have led to Ukraine’s defeat by now. Ukraine is able to hold its own only because Nato allies provide substantial financial aid and military support. A brief look at the origin of the tensions between Russia and US / Nato is merited.

★ Nato’s post-Cold War expansion

Early in 1992, after the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, a leaked Pentagon strategy document hit the headlines.⁶ It was and remains, in my opinion, one of the most prescient signposts to today's world.

The International Herald Tribune, 9 March 1992 carried a dramatic headline: Pentagon's New world Order: Pentagon Draws Up Plan for US Dominance of the Post-Cold War World. Hardly an exaggeration, the article described in detail a leaked Pentagon strategy draft which became known as the America First policy. (Nowadays it's often referred to as the Wolfowitz Doctrine. I prefer the original more accurate title.) The IHT reported:

'In a broad new policy statement that is in its final drafting stage, the Defense Department asserts that the US political and military mission in the post-cold war era will be to ensure that no rival superpower is allowed to emerge in Western Europe, Asia, or the territory of the former Soviet Union.... The classified document makes the case for a world dominated by one superpower whose position can be perpetuated by constructive behaviour and sufficient military might to deter any nation or group of nations from challenging US primacy.'

Debate about Nato enlargement began. In 1995 Nato published a study which supported admitting new members, and concluded that enlargement 'would contribute to enhanced stability and security'. Admitting former Soviet bloc countries into membership began at the 1997 Nato summit.⁷ For three decades Putin has insisted that Nato was seeking to encircle Russia.

UKRAINE WAR'S HUMAN IMPACT

War is more than a game of chess. The toll it takes on people and planet is increasingly evident. Reports continue to emerge about growing public dissatisfaction with Ukraine government; and Zelensky continues to change ministers and military leaders.

★ Ukrainian casualties

In February 2024, Zelensky put Ukrainian battlefield deaths at 31,000; he has never put a figure on total casualties to my knowledge. US figures around the same time are substantially higher: 70,000 Ukrainian troops killed and 120,000 wounded.⁸ At the end of August 2024, OHCR estimated the number of civilian deaths at more than 11,500.

⁶ Patrick E Tyler, New York Times Service, Pentagon's New world Order: Pentagon Draws Up Plan for US Dominance of the Post-Cold War World, International Herald Tribune, 9 March 1992. If my memory serves, the document was originally leaked in the Wall Street Journal and syndicated across the major US media. The full version I'm quoting from is no longer available on the internet.

⁷ Nato, Enlargement and Article 10, last updated 3 Oct 2024

⁸ Kathryn Armstrong, Ukraine war: Zelensky says 31,000 troops killed since Russia's full-scale invasion, BBC News, 25 February 2024 at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-68397525>

★ **Infrastructure damage**

One month into the war, the UN reported \$100 billion worth of infrastructure damage. Statista estimates the total value of war damage in Ukraine up to December 2023, was US\$ 260 billion.

★ **Displaced population**

The UN estimated 3.7 million Ukrainians were internally displaced and 6.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers had left Ukraine, nearly 6 million of them in Europe.

★ **Draft evasion**

More than 20,000 men are believed to have fled Ukraine to avoid military service, and conscription is said to be ‘chaotic’ and ‘tarnished by corruption’.⁹ In April a controversial new law lowered the draft age and introduced stringent penalties for evasion.

★ **Russian casualties**

Russia has sustained more than 600,000 casualties according to the Pentagon. Russian estimates are more difficult to obtain.

★ **Economic impact**

Sanctions and war have not had the impact that the US was hoping for. However, estimates put the cost of war in Ukraine between \$500 million to \$1 billion. According to the IMF, Russia's GDP was around 7% below the pre-war forecast at the beginning of 2024. It is currently reported that Russia spends approximately one third of its GDP on the war effort, more on the military than on health and education combined.

The conduct of the war suggests that Nato strategy has been to provide enough support to Ukraine to keep the war going, in order to exhaust Russia economically and militarily by means of a long and frozen war. Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, Chief of the UK Defence Staff, recently said: ‘There can be no doubt that Russia is making tactical territorial gains... [but] the war is an enormous drain on Russia. the longer the war goes on for Russia, the more difficult it is for the country.’¹⁰

While politicians hold fast to supporting war in Ukraine, public opinion in north America and Europe is changing. Growing numbers of Americans and Europeans want an end to the war, even though our governments policies do not reflect this.

POSTSCRIPT

The discussion in the IAG meeting was strongly inclined to the view that it’s time for CND break the silence on the Ukraine war that Labour and Conservative bipartisanship have imposed for the past three years. The citizens of north America and Europe are with us in growing numbers, as are a few brave souls in Ukraine and Russia. It’s time to step up our call for peace.

⁹ Pjotr Sauer, ‘I am not made for war’: the men fleeing Ukraine to evade conscription 29 June 2024 at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/25/zelenskiy-puts-figure-on-ukrainian-soldiers-killed-for-first-time-at-31000>

¹⁰ Speaking on BBC’s Kuenssberg on Sunday, 10 November 2024.

Climate Crisis and Nuclear Disarmament

36 years ago, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change comprising the UN Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organisation provided political leaders with assessments on climate change. The IPCC predicted much of the devastation; the world repeatedly suffers. Over time terminology has changed from 'change' to 'warming' to 'crisis', yet UN climate advice is ignored even scorned.

The most recent IPCC climate scientists warning for October 2024 states we are still moving in the wrong direction. Fossil fuel emissions are at an all-time high. July 2024 recorded the highest temperatures ever and current policies predict 3 degrees C warming before 2100. Climate change contributed to all ten of the world's deadliest weather events in the past 20 years -cumulatively a death toll of 576,000 people. Even these statistics leave out heat related deaths not reported in official statistics. There is a significant scale of underreporting emissions, military reporting is exempt. How much worse can it get?

It was a telling coincidence that on the day Chancellor Reeves announced the terms of her budget 30/10/24, severe storms raged in south and east Spain. In the regions of Valencia, Andalucia, Catalunya, Aragon and Murcia a year's rain fell in just 8 hours creating flash floods. At least 200 people died, many more missing. A humbled Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez warned his people the crisis was ongoing as 3 days of national mourning was declared. The UK could experience similar trauma.

In 2024 several of our October 5th conference resolutions 1,2,8 and 10 made passing reference to climate issues. Inspired by several plenary speakers and our 12 October conference workshop-*Peace and Planet: Inextricably Linked*, should CND focus more on the consequences of inaction on nuclear disarmament and the climate crisis? The Starmer government extraverted Labour's NATO loyalties; made common cause with a notably climate change sceptical America with Trump leading the vanguard in pulling the US out of the Paris Agreement in 2017. Military forces are responsible for 5.5% of all global emissions, a proportion of that will undoubtedly come from the F35 squadrons at Lakenheath and their refuelling tankers based at Mildenhall. At the heart of the Reeves budget is a major policy conflict in funding nuclear weapons, war in Ukraine, support for Israel versus climate crisis remediation!

We know the detonation of just 50 nuclear weapons would generate the nuclear winter phenomenon attributed to the dust and debris obscuring sunlight needed for photosynthesis and a sustainable atmosphere.

I propose that at this Council we consider a subcommittee from interested activists to take the issue of the climate crisis and nuclear disarmament forward. A watching brief to devise more expert webinars, leaflets, press releases from CND and supportive NGO's and advice for activist's contact with councillors, lobbying MPs and government ministers.

Tom Cuthbert