



OXFORD CND

NEWSLETTER

January / February 2025



CALL TO ACTION:

US SPY DRONES OUT OF FAIRFORD



**JOIN THE PUBLIC
MEETING AND
DEMONSTRATION**



**OXFORDSHIRE
PEACE
CAMPAIGN**

Oxford Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

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A New Year Dream

IT WAS THE MORNING of New Year's Day, 20xx, and on waking up I turned on the radio as usual for the news. "In an unprecedented initiative", it began, "the US President has issued a New Year statement disclosing that he and the Russian president have held secret talks to address the world crisis". A similar statement had been issued from Moscow. The BBC Today programme went to report informed speculation that the issues discussed had included the mounting disasters caused by extreme climate change (the South Asian drought and resultant famine was mentioned), the increased danger of nuclear proliferation with two more nations on the verge of going nuclear, and the serious threat to global health from the new, and as yet unidentified, pandemic that had emerged in central Africa. "In view of the multiple challenges facing all nations", the statement concluded, "both parties agree that these transcend their differences, and that it is time to work together to find new solutions."

After the news summary, BBC Today called in – as it usually does for international issues – an expert from the Royal United Services Institution to provide analysis. And, as is also usual, the RUSI expert advised caution and warned against any move that might upset the (admittedly fragile) status quo. In particular, he stressed, no action should be taken by the heads of the US and Russian governments that might diminish the effectiveness of the nuclear deterrent. But, quite exceptionally, the BBC editors then gave equal time to a well-known professor of peace studies who was on their list but for an unknown reason had not been consulted for many years, and he struck a very different note. The constellation of "existential risks", he said, that we now face amounted to a threat to our very existence, as the term implies. It was time, indeed long overdue time, for radical thinking outside the box of conventional zero-sum diplomacy. Finally, a British general was asked for his opinion and he said, somewhat to the interviewer's surprise, that many of his colleagues believed that the UK nuclear deterrent served no useful purpose. An offer to give it up, he suggested, would give Britain entry to the "top table".

At the end of the news bulletin, it was reported "in breaking news", that the US and Russian

presidents had invited the Chinese president to join their discussion, and that this invitation had been accepted from Beijing. It was thought likely that trilateral committees would be set up to seek solutions to the world challenges, and there was speculation that these would operate within the framework of the United Nations. The UN Secretary-General, apparently already informed, had issued a statement of support. Later, South Africa, Brazil and Turkey and other states asked the Secretary-General to convene a Special Session of the General Assembly.

In Britain, France, the Netherlands, Japan, and elsewhere, campaigning groups called for popular demonstrations in support of what they hoped would be a global peace initiative. These brought together, in a unified action, activists and supporters from anti-nuclear and environmental campaigns, and NGOs concerned with world poverty

and inequality. The British effort mobilised 250,000 people the very next day to march from Hyde Park to Parliament Square, with smaller demonstrations around the country. In the House of Commons, the Speaker allowed an emergency debate, and all the major parties spoke (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) in favour of the new international initiative, except for Reform whose MPs were absent from the Chamber.

The expert committees quickly convened, and in the meantime, there were de facto ceasefires (with one exception) in the major conflicts under way. Intense speculation now began as to what initiatives might be undertaken immediately as gestures of intent and good faith. Would the US ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty? Would Russia pledge its commitment to the independence of Ukraine? Would China unequivocally accept the status quo across the Taiwan Straits? Would all three powers agree to halt their nuclear modernisation programmes? Would the developed nations commit to billions of dollars for climate change mitigation in the developing world? These and many more suggestions were aired.

The days passed, and the world waited. ■

John Gittings



Zoom meeting and demo – USAF (RAF) Fairford

US MILITARY INTELLIGENCE drones will soon begin regular flights from USAF (RAF) Fairford on the Oxfordshire / Gloucestershire border. 'Global Hawk' drones, manufactured by Northrop Grumman, will use the base for secretive US Military surveillance missions.

Join us in refusing further complicity in US Military Intelligence regimes, and opposing the dangers of drone warfare for our communities, and for the world.



Global Hawk drone.

Online Meeting

Wednesday 15th January 2025 7.00pm

Protest – National Speakers

Saturday – 25th January 2025 – 1.00 pm

Disabled toilet / be prepared for weather
bring lunch / banners

Minibus £10/£5

Ashmolean Museum coach stop 11.15am

Book: **oxonpeace@yahoo.co.uk**

07806 600 862

Drone Wars and Oxfordshire Peace Campaign

Arms control

NEXT NOVEMBER MARKS 40 years since the US president Ronald Reagan and the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev declared that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”.

A year later, at Reykjavik, the two came tantalisingly close to eliminating nuclear weapons entirely. That historic chance slipped away over Reagan’s insistence on his unproven “Star Wars” missile defence system.

The summit proved a turning point in the cold war. Arms control brought down the number of nuclear weapons held by the two countries from 60,000 to roughly 11,000 today. The most recent new strategic arms reduction treaty (New Start), signed in 2010, capped deployed strategic warheads at 1,550 each. George W Bush withdrew the US from the anti-ballistic missile treaty with Moscow in 2002.

Without bold action, New Start, the last safeguard of nuclear arms moderation, will expire in February 2026. It would mean that for the first time in more than 50 years, the US and Russia – holders of 90% of the world’s nuclear weapons – could begin an unconstrained arms race. That dismal decision would send a message to other states, notably China further encouraging their buildup of nuclear stockpiles.

The fearful legacy of “the bomb” can be felt from Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the testing grounds still contaminated by nuclear fallout decades later. The resistance to the conventional wisdom that nuclear disarmament is unrealistic bore fruit with **the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW)**, adopted by 122 countries at the UN in 2017. Its message: the only way to ensure nuclear weapons are never used again is to do away with them entirely.

The treaty, championed by the Nobel prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear-Weapons (ICAN), was a triumph over superpower diplomacy that had long hindered reviews of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It represents not only a moral and legal challenge to the status quo but a reminder that much of the world doesn’t accept the logic of mutually assured destruction. This sentiment was amplified this year when Nihon Hidyanko Japan’s atomic and hydrogen bomb survivors group, won the Nobel peace prize for efforts to abolish nuclear weapons.

Little wonder that the Bulletin of the Atomic

Scientists has set its Doomsday Clock to 90 seconds to midnight – the closest ever to apocalypse.

A shared responsibility

In 2019, Gorbachev warned, with good reason, that nuclear deterrence keeps the world “in constant jeopardy”. It is obvious that as long as these weapons exist, the risk of nuclear war cannot be erased. The question is no longer why the bomb remains, but whether humanity can survive it for another 80 years.

This December, UN members voted 144-3 to establish an independent scientific panel on the effects of nuclear war. Shamefully, Britain was among the naysayers.

Imagination has already outpaced fact. In her book *Nuclear War*, Annie Jacobson writes of thousands of warheads raining down on America, Europe, Russia and parts of Asia, obliterating cities, incinerating human life and leaving billions stripped of life, light and hope. Streets turn molten, winds flatten the land and those who endure suffer wounds so terrible that they no longer look – or act – human.

Ms Jacobson’s point is that this apocalyptic vision is the logical conclusion of the world’s current nuclear doctrines. Those that do emerge into the desolation discover what the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev warned decades ago: “The survivors will envy the dead.” The devastation is total, offering a future that no one could bear to live through.

Amid historic lows in US-Russian relations, one truth remains: a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Leaders in Moscow and Washington should reaffirm this in the run-up to negotiating significant arsenal reductions as well as real limits on strategic missile defences. Such a statement, simple but profound, would remind the world that Mr Trump and Mr Putin recognise their shared responsibility to prevent global catastrophe. This will not be easy: rising nationalism, geopolitical rivalry and mutual mistrust between the countries – especially over Ukraine – loom large over disarmament efforts. But try they must. However bitter their disagreements, Washington and Moscow owe it to humanity to talk about – and act on – avoiding the unthinkable. ■

**Extract from *Guardian Editorial*
27th December 2024**

B52 bombers at USAF Fairford

FOUR B-52 NUCLEAR capable bombers from the U.S. Air Force were deployed to USAF (RAF) Fairford on the Oxfordshire / Gloucestershire border from November 4 – December 12, 2024 as part of Bomber Task Force (BTF) 25-1:

The deployment also included aircrews, maintainers, and support personnel from the US as well as support teams from U.S. bases in Europe.

The B-52s were deployed in exercises integrated with NATO partners and U.S. allies and involved areas from the Baltic to Morocco.

USAF (RAF) Fairford also hosts U2 intelligence

gathering aircraft that regularly fly over Europe.

It is proposed that US Global Hawk drones will fly from this base in the future on similar intelligence missions, but autonomous aircraft must fly within approved corridors and the Civil Aviation Authority, established such a corridor for an uncrewed aircraft like the Global Hawk earlier this year. U.S. Global Hawk flights from Fairford will likely be timed for nighttime hours to minimize the impact on civilian air traffic in the vicinity, as the aircraft climbs to or descends from its 50,000-foot operating altitude. ■

RAF Brize Norton nuclear transport

THE US-UK MUTUAL Defence Agreement allows for the transfer of nuclear materials, research, training, technology, and more between the two countries. These exchanges are often carried out by British C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft that fly between Royal Air Force (RAF) Brize Norton and various air bases in the United States (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and Nukewatch 2024). Between 2011 and 2016, the UK Ministry of Defence reported that 23 flights carrying defence nuclear materials were undertaken, and between January 2021 and December 2023, they reported 13 flights (Heapey 2023; Mordaunt 2016). This suggests that an average of four to five flights carrying special nuclear

materials take place each year. The UK Ministry of Defence has denied requests by Nukewatch to release information about the types and quantities of nuclear materials transported by the C-17s, citing the risk of “reducing the effectiveness of the nuclear deterrent” (Norton-Taylor 2024). However, it is likely that some of the materials transported by these aircraft include tritium, highly enriched uranium, plutonium, and warhead components for Trident missiles. Protected Ministry of Defence truck convoys also transport high-security cargo between RAF Brize Norton and UK military nuclear sites like AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield ■

Nukewatch UK



Left: Oxford CND stall. Oxford Green Fair December, 2024. From left to right: Nuala Young, Nigel Day, Liz Taylor.

Oxford Women in Black

WOMEN IN BLACK is a world-wide network of women committed to peace with justice and actively opposed to injustice, war, militarism and violence.

Just to inform you that Oxford Women in Black hold a vigil every Saturday at the Martyrs Memorial in St Giles, from 2pm to 3pm. Perhaps you can add this to your news/lists.

We concentrate on conflicts that are on-going as well as promoting peace and anti-militarism. We wear black (as far as is possible) and are silent, although we do speak to people if they approach us.

All women are invited to join. Women can be added to the WhatsApp group, which informs activists about the vigils, if they email their mobile number.

Contact: **Oxford Women in Black** on **oxfordwib@gmail.com**



Increased Secrecy of UK Nuclear Weapons

THE UK'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS programme is at a critical stage with mounting problems, and secrecy is being increased when transparency and accountability are more vital than ever. Routine public disclosures of information are now months overdue, nearly a year in one case.

At the same time, the increasingly draconian approach to secrecy from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is limiting the information that they will disclose through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, or in response to Parliamentary Questions.

The current level of public disclosure about the programme is lower than any time since at least the early 1990s. Without proper scrutiny there is

no meaningful way for the public to understand what is happening, or for elected representatives to challenge it, and the likely result will be greater mismanagement, increased safety risks and a waste of huge sums of public funds.

Members of the public have the right under the FOI Act to be provided with information on request, and ministers are expected to be candid and transparent towards Parliament under the ministerial code.

When the approach of the government is to frustrate that right and avoid those obligations, and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) does not challenge them, this is a serious threat to democratic oversight and accountability. ■

Update on nuclear power

THE UK'S CURRENT CAPACITY is estimated at 3.6GW and is set to fall further with the prospect of closure of all but one of the UK's five currently operating nuclear power stations by 2030 and no prospect of any new nuclear power stations opening by that year. That would leave the UK just with one single operating nuclear power station, Sizewell B, with a capacity of just 1.2GW.

But, just recently, in December, Electricité de France (EDF) the current owner of all UK's nuclear plants, announced that the planned closure dates of the UK's four remaining old advanced gas-cooled nuclear (AGN) power stations are all to have their lifetimes extended.

The lifetime of the two reactors each at Heysham 1 and Hartlepool, both opened 1983, are extended to March 2027 - the fourth time EDF has extended the lifetimes of the plants originally planned to close in 2008. The two reactors each at the other operating AGNs, Torness and Heysham 2, life-times are extended two years to March 2023. These began operating in 1988 with intended 30-year lifetime.

Meanwhile the opening date for the only UK nuclear power station in construction in the UK, the 2-reactor Hinkley Point C has had its starting up date put back to 2031 at the earliest (It was originally planned to open in 2017, but didn't start building till 2016, when the planned completion date was given as 2025.) The only other power station which may begin building soon, at Sizewell C, is of the same type as Hinkley Point C and may begin construction this year, but even then, is not likely to be completed until the middle of the 2030s, and if Hinkley C is anything to go by may not open till 2040

Part of the government's plan is to "achieve net-zero" by 2050. This includes building 25 "small modular reactors" (SMRs), which it is claimed will be quicker and cheaper to build than large-scale nuclear plants. Possible sites for SMRs have been chosen, at old nuclear power station sites, including

Oldbury, Berkeley and Trawsfynydd.

However, factories for producing SMRs have not yet started building, though Rolls-Royce plans to set up a facility in Sheffield University's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre to manufacture and test work SMR prototypes seems the most advanced.

It is accepted that this means no SMRs will be in operation by 2030, and it could be much later as the technology is very recent.

There are two enormous fallacies in the government's arguments for its plans for a great expansion of nuclear power:

1) That nuclear power is clean energy

The processes of mining the uranium ore, extracting the uranium, transporting the uranium from the main uranium-producing countries, all of which are a far distance away, building and maintaining nuclear power stations, enriching the uranium to the level need for use in nuclear reactors, transporting it, and storing the radioactive nuclear waste nuclear produces, some of it highly-radioactive, safely for many thousands of years until the radioactive level has sufficiently decayed for it to be removed from the storage facility, are all highly carbon-producing.

The other way nuclear plants and nuclear waste sites are polluting is that they leak radiation leaks into the air, sea and land.

2) Cost

Olkiluoto in Finland started construction in 2005 with a predicted cost of 3bn euros. It eventually cost 11bn euros. Flamanville in France started building in 2007 with a predicted cost of 3.3bn euros. It eventually cost 13.3bn. euros. Hinkley C started building in 2017, with a predicted cost of £18bn. In 2024 EDF predicted an overall cost of up to £35bn.

And not only is the taxpayer paying a large sum towards the project, so will the electricity bill payer. Instead of the previous arrangement whereby the cost of building a nuclear power station was only recouped from the bill payer when the power station was in operation, in Sizewell C's case the bill payer will pay for the costs incurred by EDF from the day the plant begins construction, even if the Sizewell C project is eventually abandoned before completion. ■



Diary



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

January

Wednesday 8th – Faringdon Peace Group
– New Year's party.

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

Mondays – Abingdon Peace Group
Vigil every Monday – War Memorial 8.15-8.45
Peacemakers.

Wednesday 15th – USAF Fairford public online
Zoom meeting 7.00pm. oxonpeace@yahoo.co.uk

Saturday 25th – Demo USAF Fairford 1.00pm
– National speakers. Minibus – Ashmolean Museum
coach stop 11.15am. Book minibus –
oxonpeace@yahoo.co.uk or 07806 600 862

February

Wednesday 5th – Faringdon Peace Group
– Film night – Catholic church hall.

7th-8th – Aldermaston Women's Peace Camp
– Nuala 01865 749459

Mondays – Abingdon Peace Group
Vigil every Monday War Memorial 8.15-8.45
Peacemakers

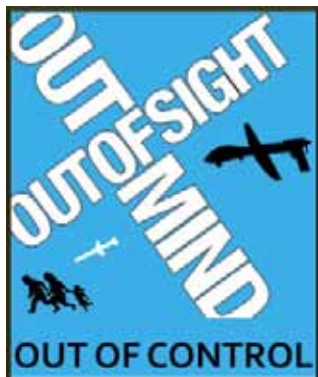
Tuesday 18th – Abingdon Peace Group – online
8.00pm. "Lakenheath – another Greenham? Making
ourselves a Target" – speaker Sophie Bolt, General
Secretary CND.

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>



Latest News

Explosion at AWE Aldermaston

An explosive component was 'unintentionally damaged' by workers at the Atomic Weapons Establishment's (AWE's) Explosive Technology Centre, leading the nuclear regulator to issue an improvement notice.

The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) said in a statement the damage occurred when workers were assembling 'a unit for testing purposes' at AWE's Aldermaston site in August 2024. An ONR spokesperson confirmed to NCE that the 'unit' was not a nuclear weapon.

Membership subscriptions 2025

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 2024 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
nualayoung@hotmail.com



Contributions to the next issue...

Please send letters and items to:

Newsletter, 22 Downside Road, Oxford, OX3 8HP

No later than: **Saturday 22nd February 2025**