

**Peace not War tour**

Kate Hudson, Vice president of CND, Kirsten Bayes from Campaign against the Arms Trade, Marie Walsh from Lakenheath Alliance for Peace, all speaking about increasing militarism and what we can do about it.

**Kirsten Bayes, CAAT**

The arms trade sells 2/3 of its products domestically, funded by UK taxpayers, and 1/3 is exported, funded by foreign tax payers. The total value of this trade is £20 billions.

The trade consists of both finished products and importantly components. There is a major effort devoted to “replacement of the nuclear estate”.

Arms exports are primarily in the aerospace sector, via the F35, missiles, bombs etc. BAE systems dominates the trade in the UK. The UK also hosts many foreign arms companies, who specialise in the manufacturing of components for weapons systems. Between 90,000 and 100,000 people are involved in the arms trade.

An important aspect of our involvement in the arms trade is the links it gives us to have influence in the Middle East.

There was a recently announced decision for the UK to purchase 12 F 35-As. The life time cost of the F 35-A and F 35-B is estimated to be £71 billion . These huge financial decisions are taken without recourse to normal democratic discussion and review. We will have a total of 38 F 35-A & -Bs, each costing around \$100 million. In addition to the initial purchase price, each plane requires an additional \$6 million each year to cover running costs.

The US gravity nuclear bomb, which can be dropped from the F 35-A has recently been upgraded and the latest is called the B61-12. It is more accurate than its predecessors, with fin guidance which allows it to travel 20 miles from the point at which it is dropped to its final target. This is known as “Stand off capability”.

American B61-12 bombs are stationed in a number of European countries, with notably a delivery of these bombs to USAF (RAF) Lakenheath taking place this July, as monitored by Nukewatch.

**Kate Hudson CND**

A recent opinion poll has found that the majority of young people aged 18-24 think nuclear conflict with another country is the greatest threat to Britain. . Just 36% think that NATO is an important military alliance. This suggests Britain is seen as an active participant in these nuclear threats maybe even initiating such a conflict.

In 2021, Boris Johnson announced a 40% increase in the British nuclear arsenal, following decades of reduction: Tony Blair had got rid of air dropped nuclear

weapons and David Cameron had overseen a decrease in our nuclear arsenal. Keir Starmer seems obsessed with militarisation. He is an ardent supporter of our nuclear deterrent and of NATO. The Strategic Defence Review, which was published in June, heralded an exponential increase in militarisation. He favours a so called “whole society” approach.

Increased military expenditure is not a route to economic success. NATO is one of the originators of this vastly increased military expenditure. In the UK this has gone from 2% of GDP to a projected 5% commitment. This trend is taking place right across Europe and is accompanied by the increasing growth of the politically far right. Trump is behind this aspiration to spend 5% of GDP on arms and it is his hope that this money will be spent on US military hardware. The UK purchase of 12 F35-As reflects his wish!

The new jets, which will be based at RAF Marham, will be allocated to NATO. They represent a big escalation of British nuclear capacity and bring with it an increased danger to the world. They represent a big handout to Lockheed Martin from the British tax payer.

Spain has refused to follow the 5% GDP target and as a consequence is being punished by the US via higher tariffs.

Nuclear weapons are now back at USAF (RAF) Lakenheath, their delivery being monitored by Nukewatch in July.

It is important to understand that there is a complete absence of national sovereignty over the use of weapons committed to NATO. Trident will cost in excess of £205 billion. All this represents a massive drain on taxpayers' money.

Ukraine is an example of NATO's role in promoting conflict. This had led to increased nuclear threats and a general softening up of the public for the acceptance of the use of nuclear weapons. Don't be fooled by the term “battlefield nuclear weapons”. They can have a yield of three times that of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

NATO is no longer confined to the North Atlantic and now has global reach. The expenditure associated with this was \$1.47 trillion in 2024. The global footprint of NATO is quite extraordinary. NATO is a blight on humanity.

The next protest at USAF (RAF) Lakenheath will be on Saturday 20th September at 1pm at the main gate.

**Amrada** talked about the link between climate change and military activity. An F35 burns 5600 litres of fuel each hour. A car could travel 1.5 time around the world using this fuel consumed by an F35 in one hour!

It has been estimated that the military contributed at least 5.5% of the total greenhouse gas emissions in 2019. The declared emissions from the UK are believed to understate the problem by a factor of three. For example, overseas operations are excluded from the emissions figures! Military emissions are quoted for the military in its state of preparedness for war. When hostilities break out, these emissions skyrocket and it is important to also think about the emissions associated with the rebuilding of the infrastructure destroyed during war.

### **Marie Walsh, Lakenheath Alliance for Peace. (LAP)**

LAP is a coalition of groups that is dedicated to preventing the return of US Nuclear weapons to USAF Lakenheath. They currently have 63 member organisations.

We were guided towards <https://lakenheathallianceforpeace.org.uk> as a good source of information about the work of LAP.

We were also urged to visit LAP's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@LakenheathAllianceforPeace>

The evening finished with a viewing of a film made by Zoe Broughton about the recent Lakenheath Peace Camp.