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Our vital work

Tom Unterrainer, CND Chair

BEING IN [Hiroshima] and visiting the memorial … was a powerful reminder of the devastating reality of nuclear war and our shared responsibility to never cease our efforts to build for peace.” So claimed US President Biden at the end of the meeting of the G7 in May 2023. Yet the deliberations of those assembled did nothing to ease, let alone end, the acute nuclear risks facing humanity and did little to move us towards peace more generally. It could be argued that this meeting made the situation worse.

For all that, events at the G7 provided a sense of clarity. Unsurprisingly, Biden declined to apologise on behalf of the US for unleashing the “devastating reality” of the atomic bomb on a civilian population in 1945. To do so would have been to recognise US culpability for mass murder. Along with other world leaders – especially those of nuclear-armed states – US Presidents are capable of delivering homilies on the world’s troubles but they refuse to change their ways. This is not because they are ignorant or deluded but because their purpose is to maintain and extend power, whatever the financial, moral or human expense. This time around, Biden’s chosen pulpit – Hiroshima – served to clarify the hyper-unreality of it all.

In buildings, hotels and offices erected on top of this mass graveyard the leaders of the most powerful nations on the planet – three of them nuclear-armed, three others members of the nuclear-armed alliance, NATO – convened to shape and re-shape the contours of global power. No plans emerged to end war, abolish nuclear weapons, house the homeless, feed the hungry, heal the sick and dying or reverse humanity’s headlong dash to climate catastrophe. The plans that did emerge will exacerbate – not cure – these manifold ills.

If for us – the nuclear disarmers – ‘Hiroshima is everywhere’, for the G7 leaders it appears that Hiroshima ceased to exist. Again.

Why labour this point about the G7? Because it throws the work of CND – our collective work – into sharp relief. Not only does it give context to our campaign priorities in the UK from this point on, but it demonstrates the vital importance of all the work already underway.

Our work against NATO expansion, the ever-developing ‘New Cold War’ on China, the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the expanding nuclear boot-print in Europe is not simply “work against”. It is “work for” nuclear abolition; new diplomacy and security arrangements and rapid action on the most pressing challenges facing humanity, from climate breakdown to hunger. It is “work for” peace and the long-term survival of people and planet. It is vital work. It is the work of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.
A S THE THREAT of nuclear conflict worsens, peace campaigners came together in May to protest at the Lakenheath air base against the return of US nuclear bombs to Britain.

Before the start of the Ukraine conflict, the US delivered new fighter jets – called the F35a – to NATO bases across Europe – including Lakenheath. This new jet can launch satellite-guided nuclear bombs. These bombs – called B61-12s – are described by experts as ‘the most dangerous nuclear weapon in America’s arsenal’ because they are so ‘small’ and ‘targeted’. In reality, the radioactive fallout from nuclear bombs means they are totally indiscriminate: killing and poisoning people for miles around.

In November 2022, the US authorised the delivery of these new nuclear bombs to NATO bases. Since then, Russia has announced that it will site ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons in Belarus as early as July.

Here in Britain, we’ve had sightings of the F35a jets involved in military exercises at Lakenheath, being readied for war. In March, the US aircraft authorised to carry nuclear weapons was spotted landing at Lakenheath, although we were able to clarify that nuclear weapons were not onboard that flight.

But the government has refused to confirm any information about what is happening there. Even the local council – who have a legal duty to assess risks and emergencies in case of an accident at the base - has been forced to write to the Ministry of Defence requesting information!

Far from protecting British people from a nuclear attack, hosting this NATO base and US nuclear weapons puts Britain on the frontline of any nuclear conflict between US and Russia. It also puts everyone at risk from nuclear accidents, amid repeated safety concerns regarding the F35a.

CND has ensured we’re part of the European-wide opposition to NATO nuclear expansion. At our demonstration we were joined by Dutch peace activist Guido van Leemput and German peace campaigner Reiner Braun. Both are active against US nukes in their own countries.

Visit our website to help us pressure the British government to stop B61-12s coming to Lakenheath.

CND Vice-Chair Sophie Bolt explains why it’s crucial we protest against US nuclear weapons returning to Lakenheath in Suffolk.
£205 billion too much

With a new nuclear weapons system set to cost at least £205 billion, Baroness Jenny Jones – a Vice-Chair of Parliamentary CND – looks at whether this money can ever be justified.

£205 BILLION is a lot of money to spend on something you hope you never use, especially for an economy that is on its knees, and yet politicians very rarely debate whether replacing Trident, Britain’s nuclear weapons system, is worthwhile. There was a period of ambiguity in the Labour Party when Jeremy Corbyn became leader, but it was couched in terms of “will he press the button?” rather than “will he cancel the whole project?”

Some of the costs for a new nuclear weapons system have been paid upfront. However, the biggest expenditure is the day to day running costs and these amount to £142 billion over the lifetime of the system. That is almost ten years’ worth of spending on primary care - looking after the elderly, paying GPs and dentists, and caring for a host of other patients in non-hospital settings.

So, can we afford Trident when public services in the UK have had 13 years of continuous austerity and need a big injection of money? Strikes by health workers and others are about workers catching up with over a decade of pay restraint and declining living standards. The sad reality is that with the impacts of climate change helping to drive up food prices and the repeated shocks of severe weather events becoming the new norm, the world economy is not going to grow and grow as it did in the old days. A green new deal in the UK will help create worthwhile jobs, but you need a change of the economic system to save our planet.

Defence expenditure is going up at a time when the NHS is falling apart. I can understand the need for the UK to modernise its defence capabilities in an age when drones, cyber wars and AI are developing at a rapid rate, but is the commitment to Trident holding us back?

Skill shortages are now a defining feature of the UK economy. It is time to knock those swords into ploughshares and release the Trident workforce for other duties. There is plenty to do, but building a green economy is going to take a lot of skill and technological know-how. It is the future and this country ought to be directing all the investment we can to making sure we are part of building that new world.
What next for the nuclear ban?

92 COUNTRIES have now signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), with 68 of these fully ratifying the agreement. This is good progress for a treaty that was only adopted six years ago. While CND’s campaign to put pressure on the government to sign continues, what are the latest developments for the TPNW itself?

A second meeting of the state parties of the treaty (2MSP) will convene at the United Nations in New York between November 27th-December 1st to plan the next steps.

At the first meeting in 2022, several governments agreed to take on coordinating roles for four working groups: Cooperation initiatives for mutually strengthening the TPNW, the NPT and other relevant agreements (Ireland and Thailand); Treaty universalisation (Malaysia and South Africa); Victim assistance, environmental remediation, international cooperation and assistance (Kazakhstan and Kiribati); and the working group on Implementation of Article 4 on eliminating nuclear arsenals and ensuring competent, effective verification and compliance mechanisms. In addition, a Scientific Advisory Group has been established. These different groups will report back at 2MSP.

It is clear that the countries who have signed up to the TPNW are taking their commitment to securing a world without nuclear weapons very seriously. It is our role as campaigners to force the nuclear states who are refusing to cooperate to get involved themselves.

Attack on the right to protest

THERE IS AN ONGOING attack on the right to protest and we must resist. CND condemns the Public Order Act 2023, which targets peaceful demonstrators and aims to prevent protest. Key elements attack historic and peaceful methods used by anti-nuclear campaigners.

The act broadens the scope in which police can arrest protesters, alongside draconian punishments including jail time and unlimited fines.

New police powers allow them to use stop and search on people they suspect of intending to carry out peaceful disruption. Those who block roads, railways, or airports can face sentences of up to 12 months’ imprisonment.

And locking-on to objects or buildings is now an offence which can carry a six-month prison sentence, unlimited fines, or both. From Greenham Common to blockading the DSEI arms fair or Britain’s nuclear weapons at Faslane or Aldermaston, locking-on is a time-honoured and effective tactic used by the peace movement to highlight the insanity of nuclear weapons and injustice of war.

Treating peaceful protesters with anti-terror tactics like this is akin to the policing measures of an authoritarian state, not a democracy. CND is supporting the Not My Bill campaign alongside dozens of other organisations – united we will stand up for the right to protest, a cornerstone of any democracy.
UK government actions increase nuclear risk

CND General Secretary Kate Hudson analyses recent international developments which are leading us closer to nuclear war on the European continent.

In some of the worst news so far this year, we hear that Russia will be stationing nuclear weapons in Belarus. The two countries have signed a document paving the way for the deployment of nuclear weapons in Belarus as early as July. Russia’s action is irresponsible in the extreme. It adds to a string of irresponsible moves by nuclear weapons states including the current US deployment of upgraded ‘tactical’ nuclear weapons to its bases across Europe. Indeed, Russian President Putin has used this to try and justify his decision, claiming that the agreement is similar to US ‘nuclear-sharing’ agreements within NATO – and therefore not in violation of nuclear non-proliferation agreements. However, neither Russian nor NATO deployments in non-nuclear weapons states are legitimate under international law.

At a time of escalating nuclear risk in Europe, this deployment of so-called tactical nuclear weapons by NATO and now Russia, significantly increases the likelihood of nuclear war on the European continent. As we know, the US’s new upgraded nuclear bomb, the B61-12, has extra capabilities which mean it can be used as a targetable attack weapon. US airbases where these nuclear bombs can be stored and deployed from are in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Turkey. But now they’re coming closer to home – ‘RAF’ Lakenheath in Suffolk has now been added to the list. A big thank you to everyone who has joined one of our protests at Lakenheath – most recently in May.

Meanwhile, the British government is doing nothing to work for peace negotiations in Ukraine. On the contrary, it is widely seen as the most gung-ho for war. The past few months have seen a dizzying array of weaponry sent to Ukraine. Deeply shocking was the despatch of depleted uranium shells for use in the Challenger 2 tanks sent to Ukraine, a move which brings an additional environmental and health disaster for those living through the conflict. Then came the announcement that Britain is also sending long-range Storm Shadow cruise missiles to Ukraine. The UK government is doing much to prolong the fighting in this war – and when eventually it’s over, much of the damage done to the population and to the very land itself, will be due to British weaponry.
Another indication of the increasing military orientation of this government comes in the shape of the Integrated Review Refresh, an updating of the 2021 Integrated Review in the context of the Ukraine war. The 2021 IR included a key strategic shift towards the Indo-Pacific region – described as a ‘tilt’ with a focus on the Indian Ocean and its two key powers, India and Australia, aiming to build a network of regional allies against China. Two years on we can clearly see how this has played out. We’ve had the launching of the tripartite AUKUS military pact, centred around the US/UK provision of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia, and all the risk of nuclear proliferation that brings. Now in Rishi Sunak’s update of the Johnson vision, we see how this controversial initiative is being advanced, much to the concern of many in the region.

Increased military spending is central to the update. The government has announced an additional £5 billion of military spending over two years. This takes UK military spending up to 2.2% of GDP this year (2.29% if military funding for Ukraine is included), with a ‘new aspiration’ to reach 2.5%. £3 billion of the increase will go to the ‘defence nuclear enterprise’, including spending on new submarines and ‘supporting the delivery of AUKUS’. The remaining £2 billion is for replenishing military stockpiles and improving the UK’s ‘munitions infrastructure’.

Once again we see that in spite of the government repeatedly telling us that there is no magic money tree, there is always money found for nuclear weapons; it’s spending billions on the military whilst millions of ordinary people are desperately trying to deal with the cost of living crisis. It’s also a stark reminder of how little the government understands that the climate emergency is the key security threat that we face. Instead of addressing this urgent problem it is adding to it by spending heavily on weapons which not only kill but have a substantial and unaddressed carbon boot print.

Of course the consequences of the government’s increasing militarism go far beyond our borders. In supporting the US’s confrontational military strategy towards China through the AUKUS agreement, the UK government is putting millions of lives at risk. Such action can only lead to deepening global instability. It’s time for change!
What’s the problem with Nato enlargement?

Ludo De Brabander, writing from the Belgian peace organisation Vrede vzw, assesses the role of NATO in deteriorating international relations.

According to mainstream narratives, Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine was ‘unprovoked’. But in reality, NATO bears great responsibility for the deterioration of relations with Russia.

The origins of the geopolitical battle between the United States (with NATO) and Russia date back to right after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and then the Soviet Union. The post-Cold War geopolitical objective of the United States – as formulated in the Wolfowitz Doctrine (February 1992) – was to remain the leading global power, preventing the rise of rival powers. In the case of Russia this meant refusing to take Moscow’s security interests into account when President Clinton planned the first NATO expansion. Ever since, NATO has moved closer to Russia in several stages of expansion. Simultaneously, NATO turned into an organisation acting outside its territory with interventions in Bosnia and Serbia. It also established cooperation agreements with many regions and countries, developing itself into a global military power, confronting other ambitious powers like China.

The US dragged its allies into its superpower policy, pushing for a NATO missile shield in Romania and Poland in 2007. Relations between the US and Russia deteriorated further after the Bush administration wanted to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Georgia at the 2008 NATO summit. Within Moscow’s broad political spectrum, such an expansion into former Soviet territory is a red line. The US government was aware of the dangerous consequences. In a confidential memo (leaked via WikiLeaks) dated 1 February 2008, the then US ambassador in Moscow William Burns wrote: “Experts tell us that Russia is particularly worried that the strong divisions in Ukraine over NATO membership, with much of the ethnic-Russian community against membership, could lead to a major split, involving violence or at worst, civil war. In that eventuality, Russia would have to decide whether to intervene.”

Nevertheless, at Washington’s instigation, the relationship between NATO and Ukraine was developed. In 2009, Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic military integration began with an ‘annual national programme’, joint manoeuvres took place and armament intensified, especially after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. Washington very deliberately pursued a confrontational policy.

It does not look like NATO will change course at the next summit in Vilnius this summer. On the contrary. The NATO secretary general even wants to see the 2% (of GDP) rule for military spending as a minimum rather than a ceiling.

Towards China, which NATO has openly declared a systemic rival, the alliance seems to opt for further confrontation rather than the cooperation needed to tackle major global social and environmental challenges.

The new Cold War and accompanying arms race is thus becoming a reality at the expense of future life on earth, unless… we are able to stop it.
IT IS UNDENIABLE that the world is becoming more dangerous. As well as the threat posed by nuclear weapons and the increased rhetoric about the possibility of nuclear war, there is a complete failure by world leaders to address the other existential threat – the climate catastrophe.

To play our part in addressing the urgency of this threat – and to make the links between climate change and nuclear weapons – CND participated in Extinction Rebellion’s recent ‘The Big One’ action around the Houses of Parliament in London.

As part of the XR Peace collective, we specifically highlighted the military causes and impacts of climate chaos with a series of workshops, creative actions, and pickets, outside the Ministry of Defence. We also called on the UK government to take urgent action to reduce nuclear and military dangers and work towards building real and sustainable security for all. We handed in letters with this message at 10 Downing Street, the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Our supporters also took part in wider XR marches throughout the weekend culminating with the surrounding of Parliament.

The threat of climate change is usually understood as a separate issue to that of nuclear disarmament. But rather than only tackling these issues in isolation, the threat of nuclear war and the threat of climate change share a symbiotic relationship as each threat exacerbates the other in a variety of ways.

Across the world, the devastating effects of climate change are making the onset of a nuclear conflict more likely. Climate change is affecting access to resources such as land, food and clean water across the globe. And if even a ‘limited’ nuclear war happened, it would wreak havoc on global temperatures and food supply chains. In addition, nuclear weapons use massive energy and resources in research, production, operation, dismantling and eventual waste storage. This is in addition to the environmental devastation wreaked by decades of uranium mining, nuclear testing and nuclear waste dumping.

Being a part of the climate movement is hugely important to CND. We have consistently supported protests calling on the government and world leaders to take action over the years. And we will continue to do so. Because in the face of the two looming catastrophic threats of climate change and nuclear weapons, it is more important than ever that we take our planet’s future into our own hands and organise collectively for change.
DERBY CND is planning action, with TUAG offering support, following the news that Derby-based Rolls-Royce will provide the reactors for a new nuclear-powered submarine fleet as part of the AUKUS deal. We are planning a webinar – more details in due course.

Some bad news – at a National Education Union conference, a motion in opposition to increased military spending was sadly defeated.

We sent a message to our Trades Council affiliates asking them to put motions to their conference in June opposing the TUC’s backing for increased military spending.

We sent this message to the Australian TUC who opposed AUKUS at their conference:
“We, the Trade Union Advisory Group at the UK Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament would like to congratulate ACTU on its stand against the AUKUS nuclear submarine pact and express our solidarity with its position.”

Any further suggestions or information from individuals or branches on how we can work together would be very welcome. Please email Annie Tunnicliffe at tradeunions@cnduk.org.

No new funding for nuclear power

IN THE MIDST of both a climate crisis and energy crisis, the calls for increased production of nuclear power are getting louder. But this would be a big mistake.

And despite all the hyperbole surrounding the apparent need for new nuclear, neither the government’s Budget nor new energy strategy announced any new nuclear power commitments or committed specific funds.

The reality is that the country simply cannot afford the costs of new nuclear power stations. And progress on existing projects is slow.

The timetable for a new power station in Somerset – Hinkley Point C – has slipped yet again to 2028, and the one planned for Suffolk – Sizewell C – is struggling to secure funding. Local campaign group Together Against Sizewell C was successful in securing a judicial review against the decision to grant planning permission for the station; we now await that outcome.

At the same time as nuclear’s continuing failure, experts are concluding that the UK’s energy needs can be met with renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and wave power by 2050.

It’s time for the government to stop pinning their hopes on nuclear as the future, and invest in renewables instead.
Local activism has never been so important. We need to be taking the anti-nuclear and anti-war message to our communities and making links with other like-minded organisations. So it’s great to know our groups continue to work tirelessly for a more peaceful world.

For Peace and Planet
CND groups joined CND and other members of XR Peace in Extinction Rebellion’s “The Big One” event around the Houses of Parliament in London to highlight the military causes and impacts of climate chaos.

We were joined by Bradford CND, Salisbury CND, Nottingham CND, North Cumbria CND, Cumbria and Lancashire Area CND, and Kingston Peace Council, amongst others, for workshops, performances and marching. CND’s Peace and Planet campaigning remains an important part of our work and we would like to thank everyone who attended to stand up for both peace and planet.

Nuclear ban communities
A huge congratulations to Durham Uni CND, who – only months after forming – managed to get Durham council to adopt a nuclear ban communities motion!

If your group isn’t involved in the campaign yet – working to get your local council to support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) – contact information@cnduk.org for more information.

Coming up
CND has re-started our workshops for groups: an opportunity for us to get together and share our expertise on many topics. The next one will take place on July 18th and will be a discussion on how we communicate effectively with our supporters. Email information@cnduk.org to register.

Stop US nukes coming to Lakenheath!
As well as participating in demonstrations – organised alongside Norwich CND – at the base in Suffolk where US nuclear weapons are expected, London CND recently organised a protest against US nukes coming back to Britain outside the US Embassy. It was a worthwhile opportunity to explain the dangers involved to the many passers-by.

Not already involved with your local group?
There are CND groups located across the country, and they would love to hear from you so that you can join the next action. Why not get in touch?
For a full list of CND groups, see https://cnduk.org/local-groups/. Or contact information@cnduk.org.
M ost of us have been impacted by the cost of living crisis and understand how it’s affecting people across the country. But the government continues to prioritise weapons and war - announcing more military spending in the 2023 Budget. CND’s work over the coming months will focus heavily on campaigning for a shift away from spending on nuclear weapons, and in favour of the things we need - investment in our NHS, money to build more homes, a better transport system and an answer to the energy crisis that protects us from climate change. Expect a new report with updated facts and figures, plus campaign materials, soon!

The ongoing Ukraine war is having devastating international repercussions as well as causing massive suffering for the Ukrainian people. In this context, the decision to host US nuclear weapons on UK soil for the first time since 2008 makes us a target and the campaign to stop these bombs coming to Lakenheath, the US-run air base in Suffolk, will continue to be a priority for CND. Our next action is planned for the autumn.

CND will also continue to highlight the danger of the Ukraine conflict turning nuclear. The risk of this happening is the greatest for many decades, and we will continue to campaign on the streets and in Parliament against this possibility. You can contact your MP and/or the Prime Minister via our website.

But as we know, the best way to prevent nuclear war is to get rid of the weapons completely. CND will continue to press the government to get rid of its nuclear arsenal and sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We’ll also be building the pressure on a local level – calling on towns and cities to become Nuclear Ban Communities.

All this work is as urgent as ever, as is the need to defend the right to protest. CND is supporting the Not my Bill campaign and continues to stand up for this fundamental right.

So see you at the next protest!