



Whatever next at NSA/NRO Menwith Hill?

CONTENTS

Why should we be so concerned about the present US government? pg2

How many US personnel now work at NSA/NRO Menwith Hill? pg3

Any more thoughts about the court case R v Steven Higgins? pg3

What has happened since October at protests at NSA/NRO Menwith Hill? pg4

What else are we doing? pg5



WHY SHOULD WE BE SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE PRESENT US GOVERNMENT?



'Out of Order': we use the upside down US flag as a symbol of protest. The Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) went to the High Court to do so. The words on flags are political statements and polite.

The US bases in foreign countries across the world, the importance of which President Trump questioned when he was a candidate, have been retained. It is also intended to increase US military spending and US arms sales across the world.

In Iraq and Syria, the estimated number of alleged civilian deaths as a result of US-led military operations against Isis last year was between 11,000 and 18,000 according to Airwars, which monitors deaths in those countries.¹ This rise in civilian casualties was driven by air strikes. The US carried out a record 131 airstrikes in Yemen last year.² In Afghanistan in December, 'US and Afghan forces conducted 455 airstrikes, an average of 15 per day compared with just 65 for the previous year.'³

Menwith Hill is crucially connected to those figures – and deaths. For example we know that drone strikes in Yemen and Afghanistan are directed by intelligence routed through Menwith Hill. Our last newsletter (Issue 1 Autumn 2017) showed just how unsafe armed drones are for civilians. It is very disturbing to read that the US Air Force says there are now almost three squadrons' worth of Reaper Drones in Kandahar and that this number is set to increase.⁴

US Cyber Command operates at Menwith Hill. Cyber Command is also to be given more importance and money.

And does Cyber keep us safer? It appears not. On the contrary, it can be argued that 'Cyber and space weapons are making nuclear deterrence trickier: if you can't trust your networks or satellite communications in a crisis, 'use-or-lose' scenarios get a lot closer.'⁵ So a cyber attack could spur the president to launch a nuclear attack. The recently revealed US Nuclear Posture Review cites, for the first time, a cyber attack as a potential nuclear trigger.⁶

Finally this US government's Nuclear Posture Review

also calls for the development of new 'flexible, low-yield' nuclear weapons even as the US makes North Korea's denuclearisation a condition for negotiations. It is worth remembering that the nuclear bombs that fell on Nagasaki and Hiroshima killing hundreds of thousands of civilians would be described as 'low-yield' in modern terms.

Symbolically, the first US nuclear submarine entered Jeju naval base in South Korea in November 2017, leaving behind its waste where protesters want to create a real peace island.⁷ During January 2018 US B52 nuclear bombers were stationed at USAF (RAF) Fairford, Gloucestershire, for a long deployment.⁸

Menwith Hill and 'RAF' Fylingdales are also crucially connected to the US Missile Defense System, which does not work and would not protect South Korea and Japan in the event of a nuclear attack.⁹

We can campaign for this and other US bases in the UK to be fully accountable to the UK parliament and to us, the electorate, for our voices of protest to be heard.

1. Karen McVeigh, "'Crazy numbers": civilian deaths from airstrikes almost double in a year', The Guardian (8 January 2018)
<https://bit.ly/2D771bD>

2. Bill Roggio and Alexandra Gutowski, 'US conducted a record 131 airstrikes in Yemen last year', FDD's Long War Journal (7 February 2018)
<https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/02/us-conducted-a-record-131-airstrikes-in-yemen-last-year>

3. Max Bearak, 'A new U.S. air blitz in Afghanistan isn't stopping for winter. But will it stop the Taliban?' The Washington Post (16 January 2018)
https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/a-new-us-air-blitz-in-afghanistan-isnt-stopping-for-winter-but-will-it-stop-the-taliban/2018/01/16/c9bb874c-f4cd-11e7-9af7-a50bc3300042_story.html?utm_term=.936db9dc7212
Quoted in Voices for Creative Non-Violence UK Newsletter (January 2018) (vcnv.org.uk)

4. Joseph Trevithick, 'The USAF Expands Q-9 Reaper Drone Force in Afghanistan to its Largest Size Ever', The Drive: The Warzone (26 January 2018)
<http://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/18006/the-usaf-expands-mq-9-reaper-drone-force-in-afghanistan-to-its-largest-size-ever>

5. James Miller and Richard Fontaine, 'Cyber and Space Weapons Are Making Nuclear Deterrence Trickier', Defense One (26 November 2017)
<http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2017/11/cyber-and-space-weapons-are-making-nuclear-deterrence-trickier/142767/>

6. Aaron Mehta, 'Yes, a cyber attack could spur the president to launch a nuclear attack', Fifth Domain (2 February 2018)
<https://www.fifthdomain.com/pentagon/2018/02/02/yes-a-cyberattack-could-spur-the-president-to-launch-a-nuclear-attack/>

7. Martha Hennessy, 'St Francis Peace Center Visit', Gangjeong Village Story (December 2017 & January 2018). For more information, see <http://www.SaveJejuNow.org>

8. This is the link, sent by Oxford CND, to a film put together by US airmen, showing 4 B52s leaving Fairford at the end of January – <https://youtu.be/JEFrv8Twt08>

9. See our last newsletter (Issue 1 Autumn 2017). For a very brief explanation, try:
Daniel Hurst, 'Former US military commander warns against bloody nose strike on North Korea', The Guardian (20 February 2018)
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/20/former-us-military-commander-warns-against-bloody-nose-strike-on-north-korea>

HOW MANY US PERSONNEL NOW WORK AT NSA/NRO MENWITH HILL?

Alex Sobel, MP for Leeds North West, asked the following Written Parliamentary Question 112002 on 7 November 2017.

‘To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many people work at NSA/NRO Menwith Hill; and how many of those people are (a) US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, (b) US contractors, (c) US civilians, (d) NSA, (e) NRO, personnel, (f) US CIA, (g) British military, (h) RAF personnel, including the RAF Liaison Officer, (i) his Department’s personnel, (j) GCHQ personnel, (k) British contractors and (l) British civilians.’

The question was answered as follows by Mark Lancaster, Minister of State (Ministry of Defence), on 13 November 2017.

‘The numbers of personnel based at RAF Menwith Hill are given below and are current as of 8 November 2017:

US Military:	33
US Contractors:	344
US Civilians:	250
UK Military:	7 (5 RN; 2 RAF)
UK Contractors:	85
UK Civilians:	486

‘The number of GCHQ employees is included in the total for UK civilians as it is Government practice not to disclose the number of personnel working in intelligence at specific locations.

‘The US authorities do not release a detailed breakdown of US civilian personnel; therefore the overall total of US civilians has been provided.’

The answer above shows the number of US military personnel at the base has decreased dramatically since the Parliamentary Question asked by Colin Challen and answered by Bob Ainsworth in 2009. The number of US civilians and contractors has also decreased, from 892 in 2009.

This is due to more advanced technology being able to do less with more. In 2014 a worldwide US Department of Defense review found that operations at Menwith Hill could be streamlined by doing the same job with more technology and fewer personnel.¹

Although Harrogate Borough Council has recently given permission for 13 buildings to be demolished at Menwith Hill, it has also given planning permission for a new communications tower to be built – another scar on the landscape of our Yorkshire Dales.

Mr Lancaster’s answer also explicitly confirms that Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) employees are working alongside the US. This has been known for some time but numbers have always been withheld ‘for security reasons’.

1. Adam L Mathis, ‘Technology led to decision to cut Menwith Hill personnel, Stars and Stripes (27 February 2014) <http://bit.ly/2psrUBB>

ANY MORE THOUGHTS ABOUT THE CASE OF R V STEVEN HIGGINS?

Mr Higgins, a US employee at Menwith Hill, was charged with causing Grievous Bodily Harm to Barbara Penny when she was part of the regular Tuesday evening Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases (CAAB) demonstration at Menwith Hill on 11 August 2015. Our last newsletter (Issue 1 Autumn 2017) reported on the case, which was heard in Leeds Crown Court between 14 and 17 August 2017.

We have still been unable to obtain a transcript of the proceedings from Leeds Crown Court. (It was sometimes difficult to hear what was going on in the court.) However Tim Harberd, a witness in the case, now gives us his thoughts on what went on.



*Still waiting for an ambulance.
Photo by Tim Harberd*

REFLECTIONS ON A SORRY CASE

The memory is such a strange thing . . . Sometimes it’s firm and solid, like a shield, protecting us. At other times it warps or melts away, leaving us vulnerable.

These are a few of my personal recollections of things surrounding the ‘flooring’ of Barbara Penny in 2015.

In January 2017 I was called up for Jury Service. I was keen to attend. Partly because I believe in Justice and wanted to see how it works. Partly because I believe in doing my ‘Civic Duty’. But also partly because I knew I’d be standing on the other side of the judge later in the year! My overall conclusion from that experience was that ‘British Justice’ is a pretty blunt instrument!

So it was that on Monday August 14th, when I walked into Leeds Crown Court, I felt reasonably prepared for what was to come. I was immediately heartened to learn the name of the judge on the case. She was one of the people who had most impressed me back in January.

I was then shut up in a room with the other two prosecution witnesses, Barbara Penny and Lindis Percy. The prosecution barrister came to see us prior to the case commencing, and my heart sank! He was one of the people who had least impressed me in January! (I have since spoken to a friend who works in the Courts and who assures me that the gentleman is very experienced, well respected and trustworthy. This is an informed assessment from a good friend and I am quite happy to accept it. Either way, I came to the conclusion at the time that it didn't really matter since the defence barrister appeared to be no sharper!)

I didn't get to hear the testimony of Barbara or Lindis, since I was the third witness. When it came to my turn I was very disappointed by the superficial and inconsequential nature of the questions I was asked. With the exception of the passenger in the car, who declined to give evidence, I had the clearest view of what happened . . . and I was actually watching!! A few things concerned me about the case, notably the defence kept on referring to deficiencies in the CCTV evidence, as if that was the prosecution's fault. I never heard anyone suggest that the responsibility for such deficiencies lay with the defendant's employer! Nor was comment made on how farcical it was that such an IT superpower seemed unable to provide evidence about what had happened right on its own doorstep!!

When I finally got to look at the CCTV footage (now back in the public gallery), I was stunned to discover that something peripheral actually happened quite differently from the way I remembered it. It wasn't a recollection that had any bearing on the case, but it did shake my confidence in my claim that 'I was actually watching'.

In the summing up I was disappointed that the judge chose to refer twice to the statements of Mr Higgins' general and historic good character, which the defence had procured, without once referring to the police officers' comments about the defendant's demeanour straight after the impact.

I was absolutely amazed that the jury managed to return a 'not guilty' verdict so quickly. From my experience back in January I had learned that juries are a mixed bag (!). But still, I cannot conceive how it is possible to 'accidentally' drive into two people who are clearly stood in front of you.

So where does that leave us? Maybe, just possibly, Mr Higgins made an honest mistake. Then again, whatever, I do still believe in Justice, and maybe, just possibly (given the nature of what goes on behind that barbed wire fence), on Judgement Day, driving his car slowly into a couple of women may be some way down his charge sheet.

Meanwhile, in between now and then, I wonder what (in the quiet hours of the night) the members of the jury make of it all in their heads?

On reflection, of all the players in this sorry little drama, the person I would most NOT want to be is the defendant's passenger.

I rest my case.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE OCTOBER AT PROTESTS AT NSA/NRO MENWITH HILL?



Keep Space for Peace demonstration

Keep Space for Peace Protest Tuesday 10 October 2017

Keep Space for Peace week was marked at Menwith Hill by a protest organised by Yorkshire CND (YCND), with help from the Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign and Joan West of the East Lancs Clarion Choir.

About 30 people attended the protest, arriving on foot, by bicycle, by minibus and by car, and were lucky to have a warm and mostly dry evening. The event was timed to support the regular Tuesday evening demonstration outside the main gate of the base. YCND supplied soup and other refreshments as well as the essential PA system. Squadron Leader Geoff Dickson also attended for part of the time.



Jenny Clegg, Senior Lecturer in International Studies at the University of Central Lancashire and a specialist in Asian studies, gave a very informative overview of the current political situation in the Far East. Juneseo Hwang from South Korea, at present studying at



Bradford University, gave a first-hand account of relations between North and South Korea. Both these speakers emphasised the dramatically increased threat from US policies on North Korea.



Dave Webb, convenor of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space and a member of Scientists for Global Responsibility, talked

about the links between Menwith Hill NSA base and other US bases in Europe and throughout the world. He was followed by Professor Nick Ritchie, who lectures on International Security and International Relations at York University. He was able to give further information about the recently agreed Global Ban on





Nuclear Weapons and joined everyone at the protest in regretting the failure of the US and UK governments to sign up to the ban.

Finally, those attending the protest were very pleased to welcome Paul Mobbs, from



Croughtonwatch, who spoke about the new role of Croughton in US information-gathering, links with Menwith Hill and the use of both bases for drone warfare. In conversation afterwards he spoke about US Cyber Command's presence at Menwith Hill and of the virtual, cyber arms race now developing.

Very many thanks again to Cath, Matt and all at YCND, and to Joan West for her wonderful tent!

We thoroughly recommend Paul Mobbs' very informative videos about the functions of NSA/NRO Menwith Hill (which include coverage of the Keep Space for Peace protest) and about the developing functions of USAF Croughton:

ramblinactivist 9/17: 'Keep Space for Peace', part 1 - NSA Menwith Hill

<http://bit.ly/2G3bCfo>

ramblinactivist 10/17: 'Keep Space for Peace', part 2 - USAF Croughton

<https://youtu.be/UB2Qv2QOoys>

JOIN US FOR INDEPENDENCE FROM AMERICA DAY

Wednesday 4 July 4 - 8pm

Outside the Main Gate of NSA/NRO Menwith Hill Base Speakers, music, singing, food and drink
Speakers so far confirmed from Conscience (Peace Tax Campaign), Trident Ploughshares, Veterans for Peace, Dave Webb (Chair CND and YCND) and Michael McGowan (former MEP and President of Development of the European Parliament)
Singing from East Lancs Clarion Choir and Commoners Choir

Menwith Hill - Postcode: HG3 2RE

Grid Ref: 54:0:56N; 01:41:38W - O.S.

Sheets: E420760; N456900

WHAT ELSE ARE WE DOING?

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD REMEMBERING HELEN JOHN: NOT ONLY AT GREENHAM COMMON

Helen John, who died on 5 November 2017 aged 80, served as vice-chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) from 2001 to 2004. She was the first full-time peace camper at RAF Greenham Common, Berkshire, one of those who inspired a mass protest involving thousands of women and lasting

THE REGULAR

**MH AC TUESDAY EVENING
PROTEST 6-7:30 PM**

AT THE MAIN GATES OF MENWITH HILL

CONTINUES . . .

Your support is urgently needed at protests at Menwith Hill. Please get in touch and come along, even if you can manage it only once every couple of months!





19 years. The women camped around the nine-mile perimeter of the base – where the US stored cruise missiles.

Helen John also started a women's peace camp (Womenwith Hill) outside Menwith Hill US spy base. In April 1993 she and Anne Lee, another tireless campaigner at Menwith Hill, gained access to the top-secret US HQ at the base by breaching the

security fence then simply holding open the cipher-locked doors for the staff coming out. On occasion they would get onto the base and make off with secret documents.

In 2005 the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA) made trespass into US bases a terrorist offence carrying a possible 51-week sentence.

Anne Lee recalls: 'One April Fool's Day, Helen and Sylvia Boyes strolled into Menwith Hill through a gap next to the main gate As only the Attorney General could authorise the bringing of charges under this Act, the palaver that followed over the succeeding year or so meant that they were on TV news nine times.

'Helen's defence . . . was that section 28 of the Act had been made in bad faith – it was actually the state's aim to curtail peace protests under the guise of countering terrorism.'

Her most recent activism was to set up a peace camp at RAF Waddington, opposing bombing using drones.

Helen told Anne Lee that she became anti-war when she observed military manoeuvres and realised how much was spent on killing whilst there was short funding for those in the NHS saving lives.

SOCPA can still be invoked to control peaceful protest; bombing using drones has escalated; the US nuclear threat and the challenges to the NHS increase. Helen John remains a challenging figure.

Based on 'Greenham Common heroine dies', Peter Lazenby, Morning Star (9 November 2017)
Read the whole article at
<http://bit.ly/2GQvGTz>

60 YEARS OF CND

Several members of MHAC attended the excellent event organised by Yorkshire CND to celebrate 60 years of CND. It was held on 17 February at Kala Sangam in Bradford.

The event began with spoken contributions from those attending, some of whom had brought mementos or written records of their past involvement with CND and the Peace Movement in general. Staff from the Bradford Peace Museum and the Commonwealth Collection at Bradford University offered to give a home to some of these items after the event.

Dave Webb, Chair of national CND and Yorkshire CND, then gave a talk about the government's plans to replace Trident, with details about the increase in fire power. That was followed by Matt, of YCND, who reminded us that we can all contribute to the campaign against Trident by writing to our MPs and local councillors as well as to the press. (It's a myth that the UK nuclear 'deterrent' is independent: it's not; it's dependent on the US.)

The afternoon session continued with joyous music from the Peace Artistes. Many thanks to Cath and Matt from YCND for organising such a great day!

LOCK-ONS AT DSEI

On Friday 12 January, after a THREE-DAY trial at Stratford Magistrates and Youth Court, the YCND activists involved in the lock-ons at DSEI (Defence and Security Equipment International), the despicable Arms Trade Fair, were found guilty of Obstruction of the Highway. The defendants, including Brigid-Mary Oates from MHAC, were fined £200 each.



The defence was that the protesters had acted in a reasonable manner to carry out their democratic right to protest according to Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act (1998), which cover our rights to freedom of expression, to protest and to freedom of association.

Some of the evidence provided by defendants included the plight of children in war zones and the trauma it causes, in particular in Yemen. Edward Snowden made reference in his leaked documents to Menwith Hill's involvement in US surveillance of Middle East countries to support capture-kill operations. The documents tie Menwith Hill to lethal operations in Yemen and provided the first documentary evidence that implicates the UK direct in covert actions in the country.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO:

The annual conference of **Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space** will be held in Oxford this year (22 - 24 June) and will concentrate on the Joint Intelligence Analysis Complex (JIAC) in development at Croughton (although the huge update has been postponed for 2 years and will now start in 2024).

MHAC will have a stall at **Otley Green Fair 2018**. 21 April 10am to 4pm. FREE ENTRY. Accessible venue. Adjacent car park.

Join us to take the next steps to make NSA/NRO Menwith Hill accountable!

£ MONEY MATTERS

There are several ways of supporting MHAC financially (see the MHAC website).
Accounts can be seen by application to the Treasurer.

MHAC Account No: 50095311 **Sort Code:** 089229
The Cooperative Bank,
1 Balloon Street, Manchester, M60 4EP

DONATE BY POST:

Please send a cheque, payable to "MHAC", to:
MHAC Honorary Treasurer, Judith Rushby,
31 Blossomgate, Ripon, HG4 2AJ
Please also enclose your address so that we can
write to thank you!

DONATE USING BACS:

BACS payments are also welcome to our account
with the Cooperative Bank:
Account Number: 5009531100 **Sort Code:** 089229

WHO'S WHO AT MHAC?

HON TREASURER: Judith Rushby
31 Blossomgate Ripon, HG4 2AJ.
(Bank signatories Judith Rushby and Sarah Swift)

WEBMASTER: Ray Middleton

**COORDINATOR OF MEETINGS & 4 JULY
DEMONSTRATION:** Hazel Costello

FACEBOOK ADMINISTRATOR: Brigid-Mary Oates

TWITTER ADMINISTRATOR: Claire Nash

MAILING LIST ORGANISER: Melanie Ndzinga

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTOR: Christine Dean

GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Paul Wood

DESIGNER OF MERCHANDISE: Sarah McEvoy

MONITORING PLANNING APPLICATIONS: Steve Hill

CONTACT MHAC EMAIL: info@themhac.uk

**COORDINATOR OF WEEKLY DEMO AND OF
NEWSLETTER:** Sarah Swift

CONTACT: sswift64@gmail.com, 01765 600928

 facebook.com/groups/145710625924658/

 @M_H_A_C

IMPORTANT DATA PROTECTION CHANGES

You may have heard that the new GDPR data protection regulations will come into force in the UK in May. This means that you will have more control over how organisations store and use information about you. We welcome the new rules since we are keen to communicate with you only in the ways you want us to.

If you get the newsletter by email and would like to continue to do so, simply reply to this email saying, 'Yes'. If you get the newsletter by post and would like to continue to do so, please return the enclosed card, ticking 'Yes'. This is a legal requirement and we are wanting to be compliant well ahead of time. If you would prefer to be removed from our mailing list, simply reply to this email saying, 'No', or return the card, ticking 'No'. If we don't hear from you by 25 May 2018, we will deem that as a 'no' and we will be required by law to remove you from our mailing list. **Your support is very important to us and we very much hope you will choose to stay in touch!**

Please contact us if you would like more references for statements made in this newsletter or more information on the issues raised, or go to the MHAC **website: www.themhac.uk**

Please also contact us if you yourself have well-sourced information on any of the issues or if you would like to join the campaign. We need your energy and ideas, whether you are an activist or have clerical, academic, professional or artistic expertise!

MHAC has regular meetings advertised on the website. Let us know if you would like to be contacted by telephone or email about them.

Printed by Enid Taylor Ltd - 01423 567764 - info@enidrtaylor.co.uk