

What lessons is Covid-19 teaching about NSA/NRO Menwith Hill?

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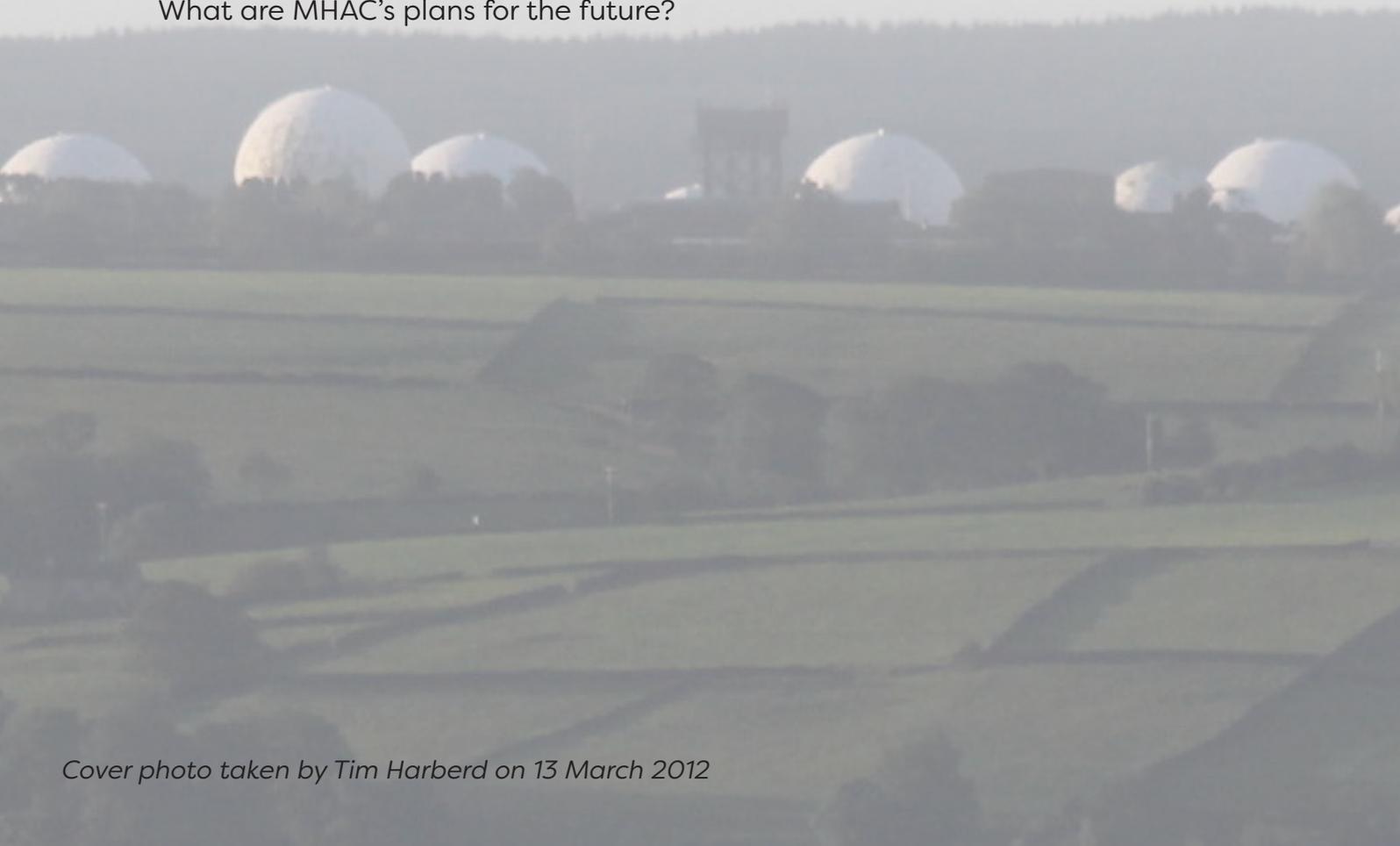
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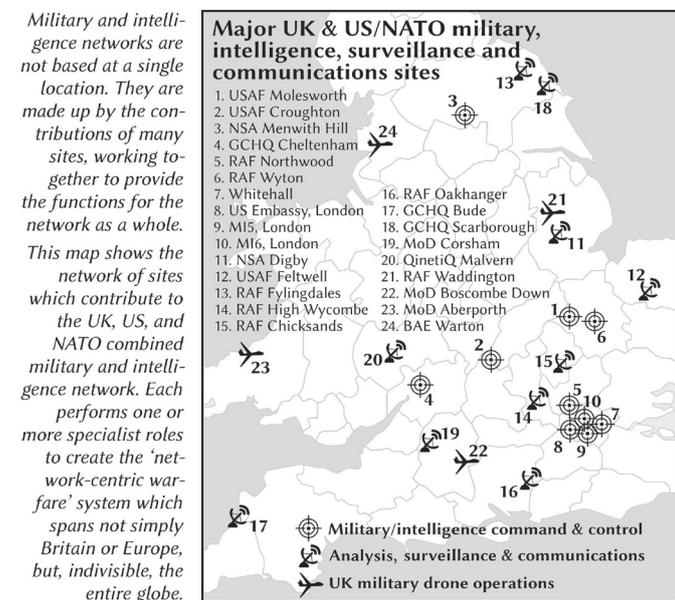


We apologise for the very late arrival of this newsletter.

WHAT LESSONS IS COVID-19 TEACHING ABOUT NSA/NRO MENWITH HILL?

“If there is one lesson Covid-19 has taught us, it is how interconnected our lives are: our health depends on the health of others.”¹

NSA/NRO Menwith Hill is part of a network of US/NATO and UK military, intelligence, information and surveillance bases that spans the globe.



Graphic courtesy of Paul Mobbs, *Weaponising Big Data*, CroughtonWatch, October 2019 http://www.fraw.org.uk/frn/2019/20190919-weaponising_data-summary.pdf

This military global interconnectedness does not make us safer.

The US/NATO military exercise Defender-Europe 20 involves the deployment of 23,000 US soldiers across Europe and started in February. Large troop movements did not start Covid-19 but may well have spread it internationally more quickly.

The 1918 influenza pandemic became a global problem as large numbers of troops were transported around the world. At that time movements were slow: people moved by ship and any illness aboard could be known by the time the ship docked. Today most troops will travel by air and will be well dispersed from the port of entry before any illness can be detected.

On another level, global information systems, which have “dramatically shortened the time between an event [and] when countries far away are able to respond”, along with projected “hypersonic craft and long endurance autonomous drones [which] speed response times . . . make global conflict more rather than less likely, as they allow mistakes to quickly escalate into full conflict.”²

There is currently debate about the relative importance of the risks facing the world in the future. The moral philosopher Toby Ord contends:

“Even adding all the naturally occurring risks together (which include naturally occurring viruses) . . . they do not amount to the existential risk presented individually by nuclear war or global heating. . . .”

Perhaps the biggest immediate threat is the continued abundance of nuclear weapons.”³

The US military and surveillance network, of which Menwith Hill is a part, is crucial to the threats presented by big data, nuclear weapons and global heating.

Fortunately for humans, addressing these threats can at the same time enable the threats presented by global inequality and pandemics to be addressed more effectively.

- 1 Ian Goldin, Professor of Globalisation and Development, *Coronavirus is the biggest disaster for developing nations in our lifetime*, The Guardian, 21 April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/21/coronavirus-disaster-developing-nations-global-marshall-plan>
- 2 Paul Mobbs, *Weaponising Big Data*, CroughtonWatch, October 2019 http://www.fraw.org.uk/frn/2019/20190919-weaponising_data-summary.pdf
- 3 Quoted in Andrew Anthony, *What if Covid-19 isn't our biggest threat?* The Guardian 26 April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/apr/26/what-if-covid-19-isnt-our-biggest-threat>

MASSIVE CARBON BOOT-PRINTS, MISSILE ‘DEFENSE’, BIG DATA AND DRONE STRIKES – ALL ENABLED BY MENWITH HILL

Massive carbon boot-prints

All militaries, but especially the US military, have massive carbon boot-prints and costs: watch *The US military is the largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world*, a video by Will Griffin of Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space (31 January 2020). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImoINGOfnMA&feature=em-uploademail> ⁴

- 4 See also Dr Stuart Parkinson’s presentation, *The Carbon Boot-print of the Military*, Scientists for Global Responsibility, July 2019. Please get in touch if you would like a hard copy. https://www.sgr.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-07/SGR_Military-carbon-bootprint_London19.pdf

Missile ‘defense’

In February 2020 the Trump administration’s 2021 fiscal budget included a major increase in nuclear-weapons spending, with almost \$46 billion for nuclear weapons programmes.

US Missile ‘Defense’ at Menwith Hill makes us a target and possibly complicit in a US nuclear attack. The limitations of US missile defence mean it only makes sense as an enabler of a US nuclear first strike. The Russians also explain their development of hypersonic weapons as a means of getting around US missile defences that alter the nuclear balance of power.

In 1997 the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases was the first to show Menwith Hill’s – and Fylingdale’s – involvement in the US Missile Defense System. Two radomes were eventually built at Menwith as part of the Space-Based Infrared System, a satellite constellation that uses infrared sensors to detect missile launches.

Downlink Radomes for Space Based Infra Red System (SBIRS) ...



Image of Menwith Hill, courtesy of Dave Webb

The threat continues and even more money is to be spent developing it.⁵

- 5 Nathan Strout, *New missile warning satellites pass design test*, C4ISNET, 11 October 2019
<https://www.c4isrnet.com/battlefield-tech/space/2019/10/11/new-missile-warning-satellites-pass-design-test>

And even more money for SBIRS:

Nathan Strout and Joe Gould, *Space Force lays out \$1 billion in unfunded priorities*, C4ISNET, 21 February 2020

<https://www.c4isrnet.com/battlefield-tech/space/2020/02/21/space-force-lays-out-1-billion-in-unfunded-priorities/>

Drone strikes and targeted killings

The drone strike that killed senior Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and up to 10 others in Iraq on 2 January 2020 could have been targeted using information harvested by Menwith Hill. Documents released by Edward Snowden prove that Menwith Hill's "powerful eavesdropping technology" has provided intelligence to enable the US to target killings across the Middle East and North Africa, including in countries such as Iraq and Yemen with which neither the UK nor the US is at war.⁶

Chris Cole of Drone Wars wrote: "International law scholars argued strongly that the strike was unlawful, politicians and diplomats articulated the dangerous impact both locally, regionally and internationally and military officials braced themselves for the inevitable retaliation."⁷ This retaliation has now happened.

In Somalia "the number of US air strikes, drone strikes, and ground raids . . . has risen each year in the Trump administration. From 13 under Barack Obama in 2016, the annual total rose to 38 in 2017, 47 in 2018, and 55 so far in 2019, by New America's count."⁸ (And US air strikes have hit an "all-time high as coronavirus spreads in Somalia In the first four months of this year, US Africa Command has conducted more airstrikes in Somalia than it did during all of Barack Obama's eight years in office."⁹)

- 6 Ryan Gallagher, *Inside Menwith Hill: The NSA's British Base at the Heart of U.S. Targeted Killing*, The Intercept, 6 September 2016
<https://theintercept.com/2016/09/06/nsa-menwith-hill-targeted-killing-surveillance/>
- 7 Chris Cole, *Drones, targeted killing and the Soleimani strike*, Drone Wars, 9 January 2020
<https://dronewars.net/2020/01/09/drones-targeted-killing-and-the-soleimani-strike/>
- 8 Nyambega Gisesa, *US drone strikes in Somalia spike under Trump administration*, Daily Nation, 12 April 2020
<https://www.nation.co.ke/news/How-Trump-aided-US-drone-operations-in-Somalia/1056-5521694-fbq1qhz/index.html>
- 9 Nick Turse, *U.S. Airstrikes Hit All-Time High As Coronavirus Spreads In Somalia*, The Intercept, 26 April 2020
<https://theintercept.com/2020/04/22/coronavirus-somalia-airstrikes/>

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The present US administration has departed from treaties, refusing to accept limits on defence spending or missile defence.¹⁰

Fortunately, while some in the US (and the UK) see their arms industry as the inevitable way out of post-coronavirus economic problems, others are questioning this view:

"If the new coronavirus pandemic has taught us one thing, it is that we need to rethink what we need to do to keep America safe. . . .

As Kori Schake, the director of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, has noted: 'We're going to see enormous downward pressure on defense spending because of other urgent American national needs like health care.' And that's as it should be, given the relative dangers posed by outbreaks of disease and climate change relative to traditional military challenges."¹¹

- 10 "The 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces, or INF, Treaty is dead, and the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, has entered its last year, with the Trump administration thus far unready to accept Moscow's offer to extend it. Steven Pifer, *Trump's Bid to Go Big on Nuclear Arms Looks Like a Fizzle*, Defense One, 5 February 2020
<https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/02/trumps-bid-go-big-nuclear-arms-looks-fizzle/162914/>
- 11 William D Hartung, "Now isn't the time to push for nuclear modernization", Defense News, 21 April 2020
<https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2020/04/21-now-isnt-the-time-to-push-for-nuclear-modernization/>

The need for legal controls and treaties: Keep Space For Peace

A demonstration outside the main gates of Menwith Hill on Tuesday 8 October 2019 formed part of the week of protests called for by Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space.

Dr Martin Schweiger of MHAC spoke of how US bases such as Menwith Hill and Croughton contravene agreements to use space for peace and of the many positive ways in which space can be used. He reminded us that the UK has signed up to the Outer Space Treaty (1967) and other international treaties brought forward by the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The UK should fulfil its obligations under these treaties.



Image courtesy of Dave Webb. He adds: "This is a gross underestimate of US drone killings because the BIJ only began counting drone deaths in Afghanistan in 2015. There are also no comprehensive tallies of drone killings in Iraq, Syria or Libya, nations where the US has been conducting extensive drone attack operations. US drones have also attacked in the Philippines."



Keep Space For Peace demonstration, Menwith Hill October 2019

Professor Dave Webb, chair of CND and convenor of Global Network, told us of about forty other actions taking place in ten or eleven countries across the world that week in support of keeping space for peace. We are not alone!

Dave also spoke on how Menwith fits in the US global military spread and the idea of a space force at a public meeting organised by MHAC at Harrogate Friends Meeting House on 12 October 2019.

Dave spoke very clearly of the emerging space arms race and of the catastrophic effects of any nuclear mistake or use of weaponry in space.¹²

However he also mapped out a path to peace in space through treaties.



Image courtesy of Dave Webb, original author Juergen Scheffran

Similarly, Paul Mobbs ends *Weaponising Big Data* by emphasising the need for legal controls:

“There are barely any legal controls governing the use of cyber-weapons, information fusion, armed/surveillance drones or hypersonic craft.

In 2017, against lobbying by nuclear states, the UN passed the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.

We need a similar kind of agreement: banning armed and surveillance drones; protections in ‘cyberspace’ against the use of weaponised information technologies; and from the intrusive surveillance of state or private agencies.

Without such rules, these systems will inevitably drag society into an inhuman, automated technological conflict – fuelled by the arms race in ‘artificial intelligence’ that has already begun.”

Let’s keep the need for international arms control and arms-control treaties – and the need for rethinking the status of the US Visiting Forces in the UK – firmly in our minds as we look to the future.

And we are not alone. Many Okinawans, for example, continue to oppose the US bases – and their expansion – on their island. (See below p.7.) Islanders in Guam worried that, as the USS Theodore Roosevelt hit the headlines, their concerns about the spread of coronavirus from the quarantined ship were ignored. In South Korea the Jeju

Islanders Emergency Committee has circulated petitions calling for a stop on the second Jeju airport (US air force base) and for the release from prison of the activist Dr Song Kang Ho. Visit their website savejejunow.org to learn more and show your solidarity.

Stop Press

The proposed US Artemis Accords for moon mining are an example of a treaty that would include only like-minded spacefaring states, excluding so many states that would be affected by any conflict or mistake in space.¹³

The US administration has recently considered withdrawing military and intelligence assets from the UK because of the UK government’s decision to allow Huawei to work on our country’s 5G and Wi-Fi networks. The US Air Force, however, says it has no plans to cancel the deployment of US F-35 Joint Strike Fighter planes to USAF Lakenheath in the UK.¹⁴

12 This video, cosponsored by Yorkshire CND, of Global Network’s webinar on 17 April 2020 includes excellent presentations by Dave Webb (UK), Lynda Williams (California) and Bruce Gagnon (Maine) on ‘star wars’, missile defence, space weapons, Space Force, mining the sky and the ongoing campaign to prevent a war in space:
<https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/video-war-in-space-webinar/>

13 Joey Roulette, Exclusive: Trump administration drafting ‘Artemis Accords’ pact for moon mining – sources, Reuters, 5 May 2020
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-space-exploration-moon-mining-exclusi-idUSKBN22H2SB>

14 Oriana Pawlyck and Richard Fisk, Lawmakers Consider Blocking Some F-35 Deployments over Huawei 5G Network: Reports, Military.com, 13 May 2020
<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/05/13/lawmakers-consider-blocking-some-f-35-deployments-over-huawei-5g-network-reports.html>

WHAT DOES THE US PLAN FOR MENWITH HILL ITSELF?

Revised proposals for three new radomes

Harrogate Borough Council has approved revised proposals for three new radomes. (See the last MHAC newsletter, Issue 5 Autumn 2019.)

No explanation of the need for a revised application was provided by the applicant. The Chief of Planning at HBC explained that preliminary ground investigations revealed a cable buried underground, which they have sought to avoid rather than divert.

The new radomes will still measure 21m in diameter and be 21m high and will increase the number of radomes at the base to 37. The revised application puts the radomes even nearer the western boundary of the site, abutting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Further objections to the proposal were lodged.

Another request for Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion for the reconfiguration of the main gate. In November 2019 HBC received a revised request for an EIA Screening Opinion for the reconfiguration of the main gate, also discussed in the last newsletter.

As we noted, the site plan was removed from the previous request. The plans now place the development about 50m from the Orchid Reserve to the west.

Following a letter from Anne Lee in response to the first request, a memorial alder tree is also identified to the west of the existing site entrance and it is noted that the tree will need to be relocated to ensure it is protected. The alder is identified as Retention Category C – low quality, meaning the tree has “no material conservation or cultural value”.

We consider this tree has “significant conservation or cultural value” (RC A3).

The alder was planted by MPs and MEPs on 4 July 1994 in memory of the late Bob Cryer MP, killed on 12 April 1994. Bob worked tirelessly for public scrutiny of the activities of Menwith Hill.

The tree has already been moved once. Originally positioned to the east of the entrance, it was dug up when the slip roads were incorporated, replanted and rededicated by Ann Cryer MP at the Keep Space for Peace demonstration in October 2002. Two dedication plaques have been “lost”.



The alder tree on 12 October 2002, photo by Alastair Hurley, see the report of the demonstration by Lindis Percy, Co-founder of CAAB: <http://www.space4peace.org/reports/oct1202mhsrep.htm>



The plaque on 12 October 2002, photo by Alastair Hurley

HBC decided that an EIA was not required. We are following up on the welfare of the alder.

WHAT OTHER PROTEST HAS THERE BEEN AT MENWITH HILL?



Photos by Neil Terry

The regular Tuesday evening peaceful demonstration continued until 17 March, with visits including from Bradford Women in Black and Calder Valley CND for Peace and Justice.

On some occasions, however, there have been unnecessary arrests and threats of arrest by the Ministry of Defence Police (who are paid for by the US Visiting Forces). MDP have also sometimes used unnecessary force, and there have been indications that the policing of the demonstration is directed by the US ‘customer’.

Protests at Menwith Hill have seen much struggle over the years. Some demonstrators have worked tirelessly for appropriate policing of demonstrations with MDP observing official guidelines.

A time of sensible policing, based on an agreement with North Yorkshire Police, ended in March 2016. Since then there have been many arrests on various charges, twelve since July 2018.

Either protesters have been released without charge pending further investigations, or charges have been discontinued owing to “lack of evidence to secure a conviction”.

Since the last newsletter in October, two peaceful protesters have been arrested on a total of four occasions, on three occasions for obstruction of the highway and once under Section 5 of the Public Order Act.

On 17 March it was decided to suspend demonstrations because of concerns about Covid-19.

Complaints have been lodged with the MDP and constructive discussions with a NYP Inspector about the policing of the demonstration continue.

We will be back! (These weekly demos were started by CAAB in 2000.)

Plan to come and join us – you will be very welcome even if you wish to be only a silent witness. Watch the website or get in touch for updates.

What news from other US bases in the UK?



Just a selection from so much available news about other US bases in the UK.

USAF Lakenheath

In November 2019 two British women who had lost their jobs at US air bases in Britain were told they had no right to pursue discrimination claims after the American government insisted it could not be investigated for breaches of UK employment law – despite the fact that both women were British citizens working in the UK and paying UK taxes. One woman had worked at Lakenheath, the other at Croughton. In December the worker from Lakenheath launched an appeal to an employment appeal tribunal against the decision.

In January USAF F-15E Strike Eagles deployed to Saudi Arabia as part of the US build-up of forces in the region to counter Iran. They “arrived just hours” after the US drone strike in Baghdad, “escalating already high tensions even further”.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/air-force-f-15e-strike-eagles-arrive-at-saudi-arabian-base-amid-iran-tensions-1.615007>

Although some operations have been cancelled, USAF Global Strike Command has kept “nuke operations normal” during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Molesworth Joint Analysis Center

The US Defense Policy Bill for fiscal year 2020, now law, provides for authorities to build intelligence analytics, fusion, exploitation and training facilities at Molesworth.

(Note that US Africa Command – see above p. 4 – has headquarters in Stuttgart but also a command unit at Molesworth – US Africom Directorate of Intelligence.)

USAF Mildenhall

The Cold Response 20 air refuelling mission involving KC-135 Stratotankers from Mildenhall was expected to offload 12 million pounds of fuel to USAF and NATO ally and regional partner aircraft (just one example of the military's carbon boot-print).

In January planes from 67th Special Operations Squadron flew to Iraq – supporting Trump's build-up of forces against Iran.

Mildenhall will now close no earlier than 2027. The decision to close the base was taken in 2015. In 2018 it was announced that more than 500 RAF and USAF personnel and their families would move to Fairford within five years but this has now been delayed. Plans to remove refuelling tankers and a special operations wing to Germany have also been put on hold.

USAF Fairford

Four B-52 strategic bombers flew north of the Arctic Circle in Europe from Fairford three times in Autumn 2019 – deep into international airspace near facilities of high importance for Russia's military.

USAF Croughton

News from Croughton has been dominated by Harry Dunn's family's search for answers.

Harry was killed on 27 August 2019 by a US vehicle allegedly driving on the wrong side of the road.

The story hit the headlines in October with the confirmation that the driver of the car, Anne Sacoolas, the wife of a US employee at Croughton, had left the country. Dominic Raab expressed his disappointment at this news.

A minute's silence for Harry was observed at Menwith Hill at the Keep Space for Peace demonstration on 8 October. Reports emerged of a special deal giving US employees at Croughton diplomatic immunity and that the government had instructed Northamptonshire Police to delay telling Harry's parents that Anne Sacoolas had left the country. The driver was charged in December; however in January the US made it clear that any request for her extradition would be refused.

Lawyers acting for the Dunn family doubt whether the special agreement affords the legal protection the government has claimed. They have become very disillusioned with the Foreign Office and are seeking disclosure of documents and judicial review. Labour demands an enquiry.

Since Harry's death, other US cars have been observed on the wrong side of the road outside Croughton and incidents at other bases over the years have emerged.

The family want the incident to have a lasting health and safety legacy. At the moment US officials will not meet the family – for legal reasons, they say.

On 10 May 2020 Interpol issued a Global Red Notice for Anne Sacoolas. A Red Notice is a request to law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender or similar legal action.

Parliamentary Question

The US employee who ran down a protester outside Menwith Hill in 2015 was newly arrived at the base.

In a recent PQ (18894, 21 February 2020) Alex Sobel MP Leeds North West asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Government planned to introduce mandatory driving tests for US personnel coming to work on US bases before being permitted to drive on UK roads.

The question was not adequately answered but there appear to be no current plans for this.

PFAS or PFOS – at a base near you or across the world?

The last MHAC newsletter included an article about the dangers of these chemicals, formally called perfluoroalkyl

and polyfluoroalkyl substances, used routinely at US bases in firefighting foams.

The 2020 US National Defense Authorisation Act included a ban on the US military's use of PFAs.

A further spill from Futenma US base in Okinawa in April 2020 consisted of about 143,000 litres of firefighting foam containing perfluorooctanesulfonic acid, or PFOS, a toxin that could cause cancer. A day-care centre 40m away was contaminated.

The information Japanese officials obtain depends on the US military – because of the Status of Forces Agreement between Japan and the US and other rules between the two.¹⁵

¹⁵ Mika Kuniyoshi, Okinawans fret over chemical foam leaked from U.S. Marine base, The Asahi Shimbun, 7 May 2020 <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13355563>

WHAT ARE MHAC'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

Research into the present activities of NSA/NRO Menwith Hill

Further research into the base's activities is being planned and funding is being sought.

Like many other organisations, we are missing out on funding opportunities because of the lockdown. Please consider supporting us either financially or with your talents.

4 July 2020 Independence From America Demonstration

The protests on 4 July started in the 1980s and over the years have featured many impressive speakers and musicians.

This year we're putting on an online event/webinar on 4 July between 3:30 and 5pm.

Please join us!

Speakers so far – Chris Cole of Drone Wars UK (see above, p. 4) and Prof. Dave Webb of CND and Global Network, with poems from Andy Croft and music from the East Lancs Clarion Choir and the Peace Artistes. Listen to them on Facebook!

If you wish to be invited for the 4 July Independence From America Event please email: mail@themhac.uk.

We also plan to be back outside NSA/NRO Menwith Hill for a Keep Space For Peace demonstration in October 2020!



£ 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:

Sort code: 089229.

Account number: 5009531100

WHO'S WHO AT MHAC?

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MHAC IS ON FACEBOOK: search for 'Menwith Hill
Accountability Campaign'

AND ON TWITTER: @MenwithCampaign

DATA PROTECTION

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter by post or by email,
please email mail@themhac.uk to update your preferences.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support us.

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 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.

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