



Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases

SPECIAL EDITION

SHORT BRIEFING ON THE AMERICAN BASE AT NSA/NRO MENWITH HILL AND INFORMATION ON US BASES

Dear friends

We thought it might be helpful to produce this Special Edition by CAAB with brief and basic information about Menwith Hill specifically and US bases generally.

The information we give (which is just a taste!) is all credibly researched and confirmed. CAAB is now under different management but information was gathered by CAAB in the past from a number of sources: regular Parliamentary Questions, asking questions, monitoring Planning Offices, articles, research, 'moles', academics, media, friends of CAAB etc, etc.

For more detailed information and analysis we recommend *Lifting the Lid on Menwith Hill - the Strategic Roles and Economic Impact of the US Spy Base in Yorkshire* by Dr Steve Schofield (March 2012).

<http://www.cnduk.org/information/briefings/missile-defence-briefings/item/1379-lifting-the-lid-on-menwith-hill-march-2012>

BRIEF HISTORY OF MENWITH HILL

Menwith Hill in Nidderdale, North Yorkshire (HG3 2RF) is a US base on 545 acres of land in an area of outstanding natural beauty - but officially left out in the early 1990s despite attempts to include it. The land was compulsorily purchased by the MOD in 1954; access and right to use the land were given in 1955.

These decisions were made by a few people

behind closed doors and were never debated in Parliament. Construction started in 1956.

Local people opposed the development of the base from first hearing about the proposed plans and the pending arrival of the US Visiting Forces (USVF).

The base published a booklet in 2010 to 'celebrate' 50 years since the base first became 'operational' on 15 September 1960 (50 years of the US Visiting Forces and their Agencies in occupation and control of the base!).

The 421st Air Base Group is located at Menwith Hill and is a component of the 501st Combat Support Wing which has its headquarters at USAF Alconbury, near Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.

WHAT IS IN THIS SPECIAL EDITION:

- Brief history of Menwith Hill
- How many people work at Menwith Hill?
- What does Menwith Hill do?
- Who is in charge of Menwith Hill?
- The role and presence of the Ministry of Defence Police
- US Bases
- Some useful websites
- Who and what is CAAB?
- Who said what about CAAB in the past?
- Contact details for CAAB



The National Security Agency of America (NSA) runs the base. The US National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) is also present at Menwith Hill (Google what they do).

Menwith Hill is part of a global network of Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) bases. Menwith Hill is a key regional center for the NSA monitoring and intercepting the world's communications. Gleaned and encrypted information is relayed to NSA HQ at Fort Meade in Maryland USA.

The land is in possession of the UK Secretary of State for Defence. The majority of the buildings and facilities at Menwith Hill (as with all US bases) are owned, and the construction paid for by the US. To date there are 33 radomes (white covered satellite dishes - looking like giant 'golf balls').

The base has grown and grown over the years. A significant development and major expansion of sophisticated operational facilities, known as Project Phoenix (costing £52 million), was completed in 2012.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK AT MENWITH HILL?

In response to a Parliamentary Question asked by Colin Challen for CAAB, Bob Ainsworth answered as follows on 3 March 2009 (see *Lifting the Lid*, p. 42 for further information and updates):

'The following personnel were employed at RAF Menwith Hill in 2009:

Employer	Number
US Service Personnel	540
US Civilians and Contractors	892
RAF Personnel	4
UK Army Personnel	0
UK Naval Personnel	8
UK Contractors	76 ¹
UK Civilians (Excl MDPGA)	325
US Military Chaplains	2
UK Military Chaplains	0

¹ *The number of UK contractors' personnel working at RAF Menwith Hill may vary on a day-to-day basis.*

'I am withholding the number of GCHQ employees in accordance with Government practice not to reveal numbers of personnel working in intelligence at specific locations. I am also withholding the numbers for both the Ministry of Defence Police, and the Ministry of Defence Guard Agency for the purpose of the proper enforcement of law, and in the interests of national defence.' [9 Mar 2009: Column 177W]

The US European Command said that 500 US military and civilians would leave Menwith Hill by October 2016, as part of defence cutbacks. The Burger King Bar closed first; the US Elementary and High School closed at the end of the summer term 2015. The chapel has closed, 66 houses have been demolished, along with other buildings. However, another radome was constructed in 2015 - Harrogate Borough Council having given planning permission.

WHAT DOES MENWITH HILL DO?

Menwith Hill is the largest intelligence-gathering, interception and surveillance base outside the US. It has many roles which are generally for US interests only (diplomatic, military and economic) – being the hub of the ECHELON system. However, in May 2013 Edward Snowden, a previously unknown whistle blower, disclosed thousands of top secret documents which revealed the extent of the intelligence gathering and surveillance on us all by the NSA/CIA (with the help of GCHQ). Menwith Hill is mentioned several times in the documents. For example, the article 'Inside Menwith Hill: The NSA's British Base at the Heart of U.S. Targeted Killing' (Ryan Gallagher, *The Intercept*, 6 September 2016) has links to and analysis of documents proving NSA/NRO Menwith Hill's role in illegal targeted killing. <https://theintercept.com/2016/09/06/nsa-menwith-hill-targeted-killing-surveillance/>

The base is unaccountable, secretive and out of control of the UK government.

Ostensibly the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) keep an eye on Menwith Hill. However the ISC are not told everything and they have restricted access to the Operations Area. The Home Affairs Select Committee said of the oversight by the ISC in their report on the security services in the UK (2014): "We believe that the current oversight is not fit for purpose for several reasons". The US authorities decide how much to reveal. MPs can visit but this is usually on a social basis. They were not party to the inner workings of Menwith Hill. Access has been denied to some MPs. We hope there will be some meaningful changes as to who has oversight now the general election has been decided.

In 1997 CAAB was the first campaign to discover and

reveal that Menwith Hill (and later RAF Fylingdales in North Yorkshire) was to be crucially connected to the US Missile Defense system. Two radomes were eventually built as part of the Space Based Infra Red System. Missile Defense is an offensive weapons system in space. It is about US domination of space – for US military and economic interests only. Read the story of the legal action brought by CAAB: www.caab.org.uk

WHO IS IN CHARGE OF MENWITH HILL?

- Although all US bases are referred to as 'RAF' this is far from the truth. US bases are occupied and controlled by the US authorities.
- The US Chief of Station has, until recently, been a military appointment. The present US Chief of Station, Miriam Garratt, is a civilian. (The US Chiefs of Station change approximately every two years.)
- Menwith Hill became an 'RAF' base in 1995 – ostensibly in line with other 'RAF' bases and to coincide with the repealed Military Land byelaws. CAAB was involved in successfully overturning the first set of byelaws. The second set of MLBs are also invalid however some notices continue to be displayed.
- Geoffrey Dickson, who arrived in 2013, is the RAF Commander and RAF Liaison Officer (RAFLO) and a reservist who commands the RAF/MOD employees but not the Ministry of Defence Police. The person in full control of Menwith Hill is the US Chief of Station.
- There are no leases on US bases. However there was a 'security of tenure agreement' at Menwith Hill – renewed every 21 years. CAAB has some interesting historical 'secret' letters and documents which give the history of the renewal each year (sometimes given by a secretary). These were disclosed in a High Court case involving CAAB in 1993.

THE ROLE AND PRESENCE OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE POLICE (MDP)

The MDP are a British police force working on UK bases and some US bases. The force is very different to the Home Office police force. One difference is that, unlike the Home Officer police force, the MDP are not accountable to an elected body. CAAB has serious concerns about the accountability of the MDP. On US bases security is overseen by the US personnel. The MDP are paid for and are under the operational control of the US authorities when working on US bases, according to a Memorandum of Agreement between the UK Ministry of Defence and the USAF (2008). On some US bases (known as 'RAF') there are no MDP present. All officers are

trained to carry guns. In spite of funding cuts, the MDP has recently been recruiting. Mark Foulger is the senior officer (Superintendent MDP) at present.

US BASES

There are approximately 6,000 bases in the US and nearly 1,000 worldwide – and growing. The US government/military perceive threats to come from the Middle East and the South Pacific area of the world (China, North Korea, Iran) and from Russia. Apparently not even the Pentagon knows how many US bases there are!

There are about 12 US bases in England where the US authorities are in control and occupation (eg. USAF Lakenheath, Mildenhall, JAIC Molesworth, NSA/NRO Menwith Hill, USAF Croughton and Barford St John).

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES:

Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases - CAAB:

Contains information (articles, videos, news items, opinions, etc.) around issues of US bases and the presence of the US Visiting Forces here and worldwide: www.caab.org.uk

The Acronym Institute for Disarmament

Diplomacy: Independent, not-for-profit research and advocacy organisation working on disarmament, arms control: www.acronym.org.uk

Global Security: Reliable news and security information – directed by John Pike: www.globalsecurity.org

Secret Bases:

www.secret-bases.co.uk/secret4.htm (contains comprehensive information on US bases and UK bases – not always referenced)

Global Network Against Weapons and Power in Space:

Comprehensive website containing, among other things, information about space technology/Missile Defence: www.space4peace.org

Union of Concerned Scientists: Based in the US – leading science-based non-profit organisation working for a healthy environment and a safer world: www.ucsusa.org

YCND: Useful information on a range of issues to do with nuclear disarmament/ power, etc: <http://www.yorkshirecnd.org.uk>

Drone Wars UK: Comprehensive information and analysis by Chris Cole (founder) and others on US/UK Drones:

www.dronewarsuk.wordpress.com

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FINALLY ... SO WHO and WHAT IS CAAB?

We are a small group of people with many supporters, grounded in non-violent ways of working and relying entirely on voluntary contributions. CAAB evolved in 1992 out of the long campaign of protest at Menwith Hill, aiming to promote public scrutiny and awareness of the presence, roles and functions of the US Visiting Forces here and world-wide. In the past, CAAB worked in many different ways. More detail about what was achieved and how CAAB worked can be found on the website. However, CAAB's management has changed and we are re-considering how we can best use our resources.

Hon. Treasurers: Judith Rushby & Martin Schweiger
Monitor of Planning Offices at NSA/NRO Menwith Hill, USAF Croughton, Lakenheath, Fylingdales and Barford St John: Steve Hill
Mailing List Organiser: Melanie Nzinga
Webmaster & Designer of Flyers: Ray Middleton
CAAB Graphic Designer: Paul Wood
CAAB Merchandise Designer: Sarah McEvoy
CAAB Facilitator: Martin Schweiger



WHO SAID WHAT ABOUT CAAB IN THE PAST – adjournment debate on the US Missile Defence system in the House of Lords by Sue Miller [Baroness Miller of Chilthorne -10 Jan 2008: Column 969]

...Before I close, I also want to pay tribute to the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases. It operates in Yorkshire near Menwith Hill. It has been the eyes and ears of the public for what is happening there; it first revealed in 1997 that Menwith Hill was to be designated as the European ground relay station. It has continued to raise this issue ever since. Its members have suffered an awful lot of personal aggravation, and I ask the Minister to look into some of the history of this. They have been arrested but not charged, and charged but the charges have been dropped; they would have welcomed those charges being pursued so that they could have had their day in court. In one case, violence was used against a member, and no satisfactory explanation has ever been given for that. However, it has been incredibly important that people on the ground have been there to see what is happening with planning permissions and some of the issues raised by the noble Lord, Lord Judd.

I wish them well in their campaign. They regularly campaign on Tuesdays outside Menwith Hill to draw attention to the unaccountability of this American base on British soil ...

Please come to the weekly demonstration on Tuesday evening (6.00–7.30pm). We are now into the seventeenth year (and it's time they went!). Join this important campaign.

Also CAAB organizes each year:

- First week of July - the annual **Independence FROM America** demonstration outside the main entrance to Menwith Hill
- First week in October – **KEEP SPACE FOR PEACE** – a call for an international week of protest by the Global Network Against Weapons and Power in Space – GN www.space4peace.org

**A message from CAAB
to the US Visiting
Forces and their
Agencies:
GO BACK TO
YOUR BORDERS
PLEASE!**

More essential reading:

Surveillance, Secrecy and Sovereignty - how a Peace Campaign Challenged the Activities of a US Base in Britain, Margaret Nunnerley (2014).

This book is based on the activities of twenty-five years of campaigning by CAAB in Britain, with particular emphasis on the base at Menwith Hill.

Thank you EVERYONE who has supported and continues to support the work of CAAB over the years.

Meetings for Worship:

Continue outside various US bases – contact CAAB for details

CONTACT US

Via our website: www.caab.org.uk

Or by email: caab@corner.org.uk

About the weekly demonstration: sswift64@gmail.com

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