Lock-ons at DSEI: their link to NSA/NRO Menwith Hill

On Friday 12th January, after a THREE DAY trail at Stratford Magistrates and Youth Court, the 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. All defendants were fined £200 each. The four who joined Yorkshire CND on No Nuclear Day (6th September 2017) were Matt Black, Guillaume Chomé, Bryony Moore and [Brigid Mary Oates](https://www.facebook.com/brigidmary.oates?fref=gs&dti=145710625924658&hc_location=group).

The defence was to plea that the protesters had acted in a reasonable manner to carry out their democratic right to protest according to Articles !0 and 11 of the Human Rights Act (1998) which cover our rights to freedom of expression, to protest and to freedom of association.

All defendants were described as "intelligent, articulate and compassionate people"; the judge made reference to their individual specialisms and approaches to the protest and to why the defendants felt justified to take such action. At times the evidence shared was traumatic to hear and evoked an emotional response from counsel, judge and prosecutor as well as from supporters.

The District Judge ruled that the prosecution had proven that the protesters had not been reasonable in their protest.

Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign – like the Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases before it – is opposed to the DSEI arms fair that is held every two years in London.

Some of the evidence provided by defendants included the plight of children in war zones and the trauma this causes, in particular in Yemen.

Edward Snowden in his leaked documents made reference to Menwith Hill's involvement in surveillance of Middle East Countries, The leaked documents reveal that, for years, the UK and US governments put out a "cover story" that Menwith Hill Station was used to provide "rapid radio relay and conduct communications research.” In fact, its striking white domes - around 30 of them - are used to eavesdrop on communications as they are sent through the air from satellites.

That method contrasts with the other NSA and GCHQ bases that monitor signals passing through the fibre-optic cables linking countries. Menwith Hill Station also draws on US spy satellites orbiting above target countries around the world. The satellites can locate and capture signals on the ground below generated by mobile phones and even Wi-Fi networks.

One of the most important tools used at Menwith Hill Station was Ghosthunter, the new leaks reveal, whose primary role was "to learn and establish pattern of life for known terrorists who use Internet cafes to communicate." The focus on Internet cafes is explained by the fact that in the areas of interest - mostly in the Middle East - Internet connections are often routed via VSAT satellite systems, which makes them easier to intercept.

VSAT surveillance was used to direct military operations: one document provided by Snowden speaks of "30 enemy killed" in Afghanistan as a result of signals intelligence passed to those in the field. Another leak speaks of Menwith Hill Station analysts finding "a new way to geolocate targets who are active at Internet cafes in Yemen." "The description of GHOSTWOLF ties Menwith Hill to lethal operations in Yemen, providing the first documentary evidence that directly implicates the UK in covert actions in the country."

That's problematic, because Yemen is not a war zone, so those targeted by drones there would not be considered "combatants" and anyone involved in their killing would not be entitled to "combatant immunity."

This is not a new issue: back in 2014, soon after the first Snowden documents were published, the barrister Jemima Stratford QC published a 32-page analysis of the legal implications in which she warned that "An individual [working at GCHQ] involved in passing that information [used for US drone strikes against non-combatants] is likely to be an accessory to murder."

Well done brave protesters and all the supporters both at the DSEI and throughout the three day trial.

We will continue with our links with Campaign for Arms Trade and of course Yorkshire CND.

We will also strive for accountability for this US spy base - go back to within your borders!

Account by Brigid-Mary Oates, previously joint coordinator of CAAB and a regular supporter of the Tuesday evening demonstration at NSA/NRO Menwith Hill from 6:30 to 7pm. This demonstration was started by CAAB in 2000.