

MENWITH HILL
ACCOUNTABILITY CAMPAIGN

**What are we
up against at
Menwith Hill
US base?**

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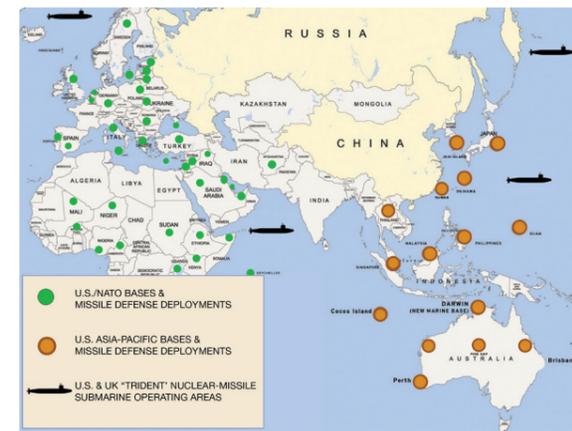
WHAT ARE WE UP AGAINST AT MENWITH HILL US BASE?

The Pentagon wants to test a space-based weapon in 2023.¹ The new Commander of US Space Command has spoken about 'the changing realm of space operations – that it is becoming a contested "war-fighting domain".² NATO also aims at recognising space as a domain of warfare this year and the UK will become the first nation to join 'Operation Olympic Defender – a US-led international coalition formed to deter hostile actors in space.'³

Any war in space could be disastrous.

The US military also remains 'the largest institutional consumer of hydrocarbons in the world' according to an independent study conducted by Lancaster and Durham universities.⁴ About one third of its emissions occurs in major conflict zones.

NSA/NRO Menwith Hill surveillance base has many roles in US 'defense', roles that depend on space. (Interestingly, the new Commander of the USAF 50th Space Wing at Schriever Air Force Base in Colorado USA was formerly USAF Commander at Menwith Hill.⁵)



Some bases in the US military empire – all dependent on space. Image courtesy of Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space

Are we alone in our opposition?

No. Opposition and arguments have continued in the US Congress and Senate about, for example, the possible costs of Space Force and of the next generation of missile-warning satellites. Opposition and arguments for rethinking security have also continued across the world, from Okinawa, Japan, to East Africa.

1. Patrick Tucker, *Pentagon Wants to Test a Space-Based Weapon in 2023*, *Defense One*, 14 March 2019 <https://www.defenseone.com/technology/2019/03/pentagon-wants-test-space-based-weapon-2023/155581>
2. Valerie Insinna, *Here's what the first few years of US Space Command might look like*, *Defense News*, 4 June 2019 <https://www.defensenews.com/space/2019/06/04/heres-what-the-first-few-years-of-us-space-command-might-look-like>
3. *Defence Secretary wants RAF Pilots to Earn 'Space Wings'*, *Forces Network*, 18 July 2019 <https://www.forces.net/news/space/defencesecretary-wants-raf-pilots-earn-space-wings>
4. Dr David Bigger, co-author of the study, quoted in: Kay Vandette, *US military emits more CO2 than some small industrialized countries*, *earth.com*, 23 June 2019 <https://www.earth.com/news/us-military-emits-co2/>
5. *Change of Command at Schriever Air Force Base*, *KVOR*, 24 June 2019 <http://www.kvor.com/2019/06/24/change-of-command-at-schriever-air-force-base/>

HOW IS NSA/NRO MENWITH HILL CONTRIBUTING TO US 'DEFENSE'?

The following are just some snippets of news about some of the base's roles.

IN US DRONE STRIKES

A German court ruled back in March that the German government must ensure that any drone strikes coordinated through US military bases in Germany comply with international law.¹

Jennifer Gibson, staff attorney at Reprieve, has said the case puts the UK on notice. 'UK personnel have played a "crucial and sustained role" in the US military drone programme, with UK officials reportedly taking part in so-called "hits", "triangular[ing]" intelligence for targets lists, "tasking targets" via Menwith Hill and by participating in a "joint operations room" with US and Yemeni forces in support of strikes.'²

1. Marcus Kloeckner, *German court says potentially illegal drone strikes aided by Ramstein, despite USAF denials*, *Stars and Stripes*, 19 March 2019 <https://bit.ly/2kU5P6z>
2. Agency reporter, *German court to hear drone strikes complicity case*, *Ekklesia*, 14 March 2019 <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/27900>

IN POSSIBLE US USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Martin Schweiger writes:

In the very near future [by 30 September 2019?] a new modified version of the Trident nuclear warhead will be coming off the production line.¹ It is called the W76-2 and its special feature is that its explosive power is 'only' about 5 kilotons of TNT, about a third of the force of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. At least 90,000 people died from the blast and acute effects of radiation in Hiroshima. The true figure may be far higher.

According to The Guardian, 'The Trump administration has argued the development of a low-yield weapon would make nuclear war less likely, by giving the US a more flexible deterrent. It would counter any enemy perception that the US would balk at using its own fearsome arsenal in response to a limited nuclear attack because its missiles were all in the hundreds of kiloton range and "too big to use", because they would cause untold civilian casualties.'² This perspective is strongly disputed.³ However it is clear that some key figures in the present US government think that these small nuclear weapons can actually be used.

So where does Menwith Hill fit in? The primary purpose and function of NSA/NRO Menwith Hill is surveillance. The use of multiple channels of surveillance results in a large amount of data being gathered about potential threats and targets. If the definition of the target is very clear and weapons can be delivered with great accuracy the risk of collateral damage may be considered by some to be acceptable. Low-yield nuclear weapons such as W76-2 are being added to the options available.

There are significant problems. Very large data sets, such as the data set being generated at Menwith Hill, can be so large that true data are lost in the fog of excessive information. [It also seems that it will not be possible to determine, for example, whether an adversary's missile is 'low yield' or 'high yield' – with possibly disastrous consequences.³]

1. Aaron Mehta, *Trump's new nuclear weapon has entered production*, *Defense News*, 28 January 2019 <https://bit.ly/2DOGPEn>

2 Julian Borger, *US nuclear weapons: first low-yield warheads roll off the production line*, The Guardian, 28 January 2019 <https://bit.ly/2G7AUJo>

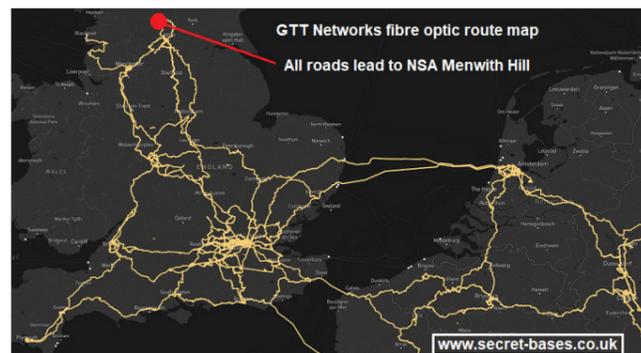
3 David Kramer, *Commentary: The US doesn't need new low-yield nuclear weapons*, Physics Today, 27 June 2019 <https://bit.ly/2lt5IPC>

IN SURVEILLANCE

In a recent article Gareth Corfield identifies how *All roads in US cable biz GTT's Brit network seem to lead to Menwith Hill: You know, the US spy station with the golf balls* (The Register, 13 August 2019, https://www.theregister.co.uk/2019/08/13/gtt_uk_cable_network_menwith_hill/).

Gareth continues: 'Thanks to the diligent efforts of Alan Turnbull at secret-bases.co.uk, The Register can point the curious (and the conspiratorial) to a handy map of fibre-optic cables that seems to show the bulk of GTT's British operations links Menwith Hill to the Continent – and to transatlantic cables leading back to America... GTT also has high-bandwidth fibre-optic cables leading down to Cornwall – where GCHQ has its Bude cable-tapping station, eavesdropping on Britons' internet communications' (at Morwenstow, see map below).

The article explains how, at Menwith Hill, the NSA can eavesdrop on phone lines and internet traffic, avoiding US laws.



GTT (Hibernia) Networks fibre optic cable route map: All roads lead to NSA Menwith Hill! Source: www.infrapedia.com, captioned version via secret-bases.co.uk <https://www.secret-bases.co.uk/secret5.htm?permalink=bizarre#bizarre>

WHAT DEVELOPMENTS ARE PLANNED AT MENWITH HILL?

A planning application submitted in June this year by the UK Ministry of Defence, on behalf of the US National Security Agency, proposed building three additional radomes – in addition to the additional radome approved in 2018.

The application was, of course, approved. It will increase the number of radomes at the base to 37.

The application states the new radomes are 'required to meet the operational output of the station'. This means to meet the needs of the US NSA, signifying increased collection of data for US military, political and industrial purposes.

The new radomes will be 21m in diameter (and 21m high, equivalent to seven-storey buildings and similar in size to other radomes on the site). Like the radome for which construction was approved last year, they will be sited just beyond the built-up area of the base, on grassland. A new 'support building' and the extension of the road network are also involved.



NSA/NRO Menwith Hill proposed new radomes and GTT Hibernia fibre optic equipment. Source: Google maps, captioned version via secret-bases.co.uk <https://www.secret-bases.co.uk/secret5.htm?permalink=bizarre#bizarre>

Although this will obviously have considerable visual impact, including on the adjacent Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the development was judged as making 'no significant additional impact' (Landscape Assessment, p. 24).

Seven people wrote to object to the application. However one letter was not picked up in Harrogate Borough Council's mailbox and processed in time and another was received early but was neither acknowledged nor published on the website until the decision date.

It was important to write in about this significant application. The US Visiting Forces can do as they like and the Local Planning Authority can only make sure that some processes are followed.

In July a request was submitted to HBC, on behalf of the UK Secretary of State for Defence, for a formal Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion concerning a proposed reconfiguration of the main gate at Menwith Hill. Apparently this was to meet the security standards required by the US and UK armed forces. (A covering letter and detailed site plan of the proposed development have since been removed from the HBC site: the development would have touched the corner of Menwith Hill designated a site of special conservation because it is colonised by rare native orchids.)



Orchid photographed in the Nature Reserve at the northwest corner of the Menwith Hill site, June 2019.

However eight USAF infrastructure projects in the UK, worth \$179m and including the restructuring of the main gate at Menwith Hill, have been postponed to fund the US border wall.¹

1 **Mexico still isn't paying for the wall. But here's where the money is coming from**, CNN, 6 September 2019 https://m.cnn.com/en/article/h_6e7681523ad2fab4e8fc5cea3af7be03

WHAT NEWS FROM OTHER US BASES IN THE UK?



Menwith Hill is part of a network of US bases in the UK. The following few items of news show just how involved the UK will be in any war the US chooses to wage – across the world.

Fylingdales

Fylingdales (SSPAR stands for Solid State Phased Array Radar System) monitors missile launches along with Menwith Hill and tracks satellites and space debris, offering 360-degree coverage up to 3,000 miles into space using so much power that the site needs its own power station. Information is passed to the UK and US governments.

Feltwell

USAF Gen. John (Jay) Raymond, new Commander of both US Space Command and Air Force Space Command, led the 5th Space Surveillance Squadron at RAF Feltwell at one time.

Lakenheath

RAF Lakenheath and nearby RAF Mildenhall serve as the two main US Air Force bases in the UK.

The 48th Fighter Wing, based at Lakenheath, is the only USAF F-15 fighter wing in Europe. In May US F-15C fighter jets from Lakenheath were deployed to south-west Asia in a show of strength against Iran.

In July work began on a new Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II infrastructure. About 1,200 additional personnel are expected on the base as part of the arrival of two new F35 squadrons in 2021. (It has been claimed that 'the F-35 could make some neighborhoods in the US unliveable' because of the noise it generates.) US F-35 Lightning IIs trained at Lakenheath in July with the RAF.

A report published in September by Airprox describes how, in spite of sophisticated command and control, two US F-15 fighter jets inadvertently flew across a Cambridgeshire parachuting site on 17 April, just missing two parachutists.

1 **Kyle Mizokami, The F-35 Could Make Some Neighborhoods in the U.S. Unliveable**, Popular Mechanics, 7 August 2019 <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/aviation/a28625774/f-35-too-loud/>

Molesworth

The US intelligence-gathering hub at RAF Molesworth, one of several US bases slated for closure, may stay where it is rather than move to Croughton as planned. The US Senate's 2020 National Defense Authorization Act calls for funds to build an 'intelligence fusion center' and 'battlefield information collection and exploitation system center' at Molesworth.¹

1 **John Vandiver, Pentagon reconsiders plan to relocate key US intelligence hub within Britain**, Stars and Stripes, 18 July 2019 <https://bit.ly/2lJPA3b>

Alconbury

Alconbury is being scaled back physically, some parts of the base having been allocated for housing development. However the 423rd Communications Squadron, for example, protects the cyber networks for RAF Alconbury and RAF Molesworth. The 423rd CS mission is 'to provide premier uninterrupted, secure communications support and global connectivity for the United States and its mission partners', supporting military operations. The unit works closely with units from Ramstein Air Base, Joint Based Langley-Eustis, Joint Warfare Center Stavanger, Mildenhall, Lakenheath and Croughton.¹

1 **Jennifer Zima, An Air Force Coder's Tale**, dvids, 8 August 2019 <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/335502/air-force-coders-tale>

Mildenhall

Planes from Mildenhall have taken part in many 'exercises' across Europe and Africa. USAF F-16C Fighting Falcons received fuel over Morocco from KC-135 Stratotankers from the 100th Air Refueling Wing, RAF Mildenhall, during exercise African Lion 2019 in April. 'One of the many strengths of the US Air Force is the ability to project airpower globally. That can happen because the Air Force has an efficient system for in-flight refueling.' They also provided fuelling support for the B52s during their 'exercises' from Fairford and for the B2 stealth bombers over the Arctic Circle.

1 **Benjamin Cooper, KC-135 Silent Partner, extending global reach in Europe and Africa**, dvids, 10 April 2019 <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/317537/kc-135-silent-partner-extending-global-reach-europe-and-africa>

Croughton

The Pentagon has stopped short of saying whether it is considering scrapping a plan to build a new centre at RAF Croughton, which would include \$200 million in upgrades. (See news item about Molesworth above.) A planning application has revealed plans for an extension to the existing armory.

Barford St John

Planning applications reveal that, for example, four existing antennae have been replaced with new antennae.

Fairford

US Air Forces in Europe's forward operating location for bombers, Fairford is one of only three bases outside continental US that can handle the B-2 strategic stealth bomber (which is nuclear capable at £1.6bn). In March USAF B-52 Stratofortresses (able to carry nuclear cruise missiles) conducted training flights in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea, provoking reactions from Russian defence forces. They also flew over Iceland, Norway, Netherlands, Romania and Morocco.

At the time of writing three B-2 Spirits and a B52 are at Fairford ready to take part in a massive military 'training' operation in the Czech Republic called Ample Strike.

More than 2,000 USAF personnel and family members will be moving to RAF Fairford from RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk over the next five years as part of the relocation of the RC-135 mission.

Five of the US projects in the UK postponed to fund the US border wall related to the development of Fairford.

Welford

Welford is the second-largest munitions store in US Air

Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa. From 15-19 May a US air force unit moved a huge quantity of munitions from Newport to Welford. 121 containers of explosives with a net weight of 450,000 lb were delivered by 71 trucks, the largest operation of its kind for a decade.

Paul Rogers wrote in June: 'If there is a US war with Iran then Welford is highly likely to be involved.'

1 **Paul Rogers, A devastated Iran could keep hurting the US – and the UK can't be neutral, Open Democracy, 10 June 2019** <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/a-devastated-iran-could-keep-hurting-the-us-and-the-uk-cant-be-neutral/>

PFAS – AT MENWITH HILL OR A BASE NEAR YOU?

In the US the military are having to face up to the massive costs of contamination of bases by PFAs, which federal authorities say appear linked to certain cancers and other health and developmental problems.

Formally called perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, PFAS have been called 'forever chemicals' because they are expected to take hundreds or thousands of years to break up.¹

Dave Webb (chair of CND, convener of Global Network and a member of Scientists for Global Responsibility) writes: 'these dangerous chemicals are used in fire-fighting foams routinely deployed on NATO bases... At Ramstein, groundwater was found to contain 264 µg/l of PFAS – 2,640 times above the EU threshold.'

(Fluorinated pollutants in contaminated waterways on Okinawa almost certainly came from US air bases.)²

Dave advises: 'If you live near a US military base, especially one where US aircraft are housed, it is strongly recommended that you look into the possible contamination of surface water or groundwater by PFAS – check with your local health and environmental offices.'

1 **See: IPEN Expert Panel, THE GLOBAL PFAS PROBLEM: FLUORINE-FREE ALTERNATIVES AS SOLUTIONS, April-May 2019** <https://bit.ly/2miihM>

2 **Rebecca Trager, US air bases blamed for fluorinated pollutants on Japanese Island, Chemistry World, 12 June 2019** <https://bit.ly/2N3fYty>

WHAT NEWS OF PROTEST AT MENWITH HILL?

One protester has been arrested twice since the last newsletter for alleged obstruction of the highway.

On 17 April she was charged with obstruction of the highway and was to appear in Harrogate Magistrates' Court on 16 May 2019. However she was notified on 13 May that the case had been discontinued. The reason given was 'not enough evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction'. (There was evidence but they did not want it produced in court.)

On 30 August she was at Menwith Hill at about 7.15 am to greet the early shift, a regular spontaneous witness and protest. At 7.47 am she was arrested by the Ministry of Defence Police and taken to Harrogate Police Station. She was in custody for more than 6 hours 15 minutes and finally released without charge pending investigations.

The weekly Tuesday evening demonstration has continued, with the Ministry of Defence Police continuing to ask us to

demonstrate from behind barriers. We have good reasons for not protesting there.

Two letters to North Yorkshire Police and MDP expressing concerns have received replies from NYP but no response from MDP.



Francis Daehoon Lee

On 8 May we were privileged to welcome Francis Daehoon Lee of the People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), a non-governmental organization based in Seoul, South Korea, to a demonstration outside the main gates of Menwith Hill.

Francis finished an illuminating talk by stressing two things: the chance, now, of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula after 70 years; and the humanitarian crisis exacerbated by US and UN sanctions. For a full report visit our website www.themhac.uk.

WHAT HAPPENED AT MENWITH HILL ON 4 JULY – INDEPENDENCE FROM AMERICA DAY?



A demonstration



The annual Independence from America Day took place at the Main Gate of NSA/NRO Menwith Hill on Thursday 4 July to highlight the lack of accountability of the base and its occupants.

More than 50 people travelled to the demonstration from all over Yorkshire, some by bicycle. They were entertained by the band Reason Breeds Monsters and by the East Lancs Clarion Choir as well as by poet Andy Croft.

There were three excellent and informative speakers, who had travelled from other parts of the country.

Jenny Clegg, from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Global Dangers Tour, spoke about the increasing threat to world peace posed in particular by the breakdown of relations between America and Iran.

Robin Brookes, of Conscience, the Peace Tax Campaign, encouraged those present to consider withholding taxes that go to buy arms or carry on wars. Instead money from taxes should support the NHS and Social Care.

Celia McKeon, of Re-thinking Security, explained the work of that organisation, which is making progress towards a new way of considering how to resolve conflicts, relax tensions and provide alternative solutions to using war.

Cath Bann of YCND spoke about the death that morning of Peter Le Mare, a life-long CND member from Cornwall. She spoke movingly of how he believed in 'Life, love, peace and freedom', his last words to her.

We also remembered Doris Porteous, who died in June 2019. Her daughter Fiona was able to attend and supplied these words, which were read before the two-minute silence.



Doris Porteous

Doris and her husband, Richard, shared a strong belief in peace, justice and equality. They were both dedicated demonstrators and in the 1980s very active members of Otley Peace Action Group. As well as attending local meetings they took part in many events including Stop Trident in Barrow, Ex Services CND rallies in London, demonstrations and vigils at Fylingdales and Menwith Hill.

At Remembrance Day events they always wore their medals with a white poppy alongside the red.

In the late 80s their presence was regular at the weekly vigil at Menwith – sometimes they were the only ones there.

This short piece from an OPAG newsletter in 1988 sums up their contribution to the local peace cause:

'Whether joining us on demonstrations or leafleting or wearing their medals, Doris and Richard are a constant reminder to us all of the War Generation. We wish more ex-services members would join them and us, but their support and protest is a vital and sustaining part of Otley Peace Action Group activities. It's always more fun when they are around and that speaks volumes. Our love and thanks to both of them.'

'In a gentle way you can shake the world.'
(Mahatma Gandhi)

The 4 July demonstration was organised jointly by the Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign www.themhac.uk and by Yorkshire CND www.yorkshirecnd.org.uk.

FOR THE FUTURE

There have been many changes at Menwith Hill since the 2012 publication by Yorkshire CND of their excellent handbook *Lifting the Lid on Menwith Hill: The Strategic Roles and Economic Impact of the US Spy Base in Yorkshire* by Steve Schofield. Whilst it remains very useful and informative, technology and base use have moved on.

MHAC cannot give up to date information to the public if we do not have it ourselves, so we have met with YCND and a possible researcher and decided to look for funding to produce a modest publication which would also be available as a presentation and on social media. It is early days and we'll keep you informed of progress, especially as regards funding.

THERE ARE REGULAR PEACEFUL PROTESTS AT THE MAIN GATE OF THE NSA/NRO MENWITH HILL (HG3 2SW) ON TUESDAY EVENINGS FROM 6 – 7.30 PM. PLEASE COME ALONG AND JOIN US.



Tuesday 8 October 6 – 7.30 pm, special demonstration at the base to mark Keep Space for Peace Week, a week of action called for by Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. Speakers to be confirmed.

12 October – KEEP SPACE FOR PEACE IN HARROGATE: Public meeting with speakers and refreshments organised by Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign and Yorkshire CND. Dave Webb (chair of CND, convener of Global Network and a member of Scientists for Global Responsibility) will speak on how Menwith fits in the US global military spread and the idea of a space force.

At 7 pm, Harrogate Friends Meeting House, 12a Queen Parade, Harrogate, HG1 5PP (wheelchair access and hearing loop). Contact for enquiries 01765 600928 sswift64@gmail.com.

CAN WE MAKE UK INVOLVEMENT IN US 'DEFENSE' POLICY THE SUBJECT OF PEACEFUL DEBATE, IN YORKSHIRE AND ELSEWHERE? WITH PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATES?

£ MONEY MATTERS

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

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

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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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