

NATO and US-bases in UK and the Nordic countries – Sophie Bolt (CND)

Thanks so much for invitation. Lovely to see everyone!

Such an important meeting – as we all know that it's NATO at the heart of driving a new cold war that threatens us all.

There has been some speculation that a Trump victory in November would see a reversal of the US's nuclear build-up across Europe, but he's made clear – like we all knew – that if he's elected the US will not be pulling its nukes out of Europe and has repeated his call for members to increase defence spending commitments. This is in a situation where NATO spending across Europe is at an unprecedented level.

Whilst NATO is not formally engaged in supporting the genocidal war on Gaza, many NATO states are and the role of the US is central - arming and funding Israel and vetoing every ceasefire vote in the UN.

So it is no surprise, that NATO secretary General Jens Stoltenberg made clear from the outset that "Israel does not stand alone."

The Sit now is absolutely horrific. Every day there is another atrocity. Images of starving people murdered as they queue for food.

UN agencies all say now population are experiencing famine in disease ridden camps.

It's some sick joke of Biden building port while 100s of trucks laden with aid have been held at Gaza's borders for weeks.

Last month US bombed bases in Syria and Iraq supposedly with links to Iran in what looks like attempt by US to draw Iran and Iraq into direct conflict with it.

Very dangerous.

While global north complicit in genocide, Global South leading on attempts to stop it. Vote in UN. Landmark vote supporting South

Africa's case of genocide against Israel at the International Court of Justice.

It is to be welcomed that NATO member Canada has voted to halt arms sales to Israel. It is so late but significant nonetheless.

The UK has given total backing to US & Israel's genocidal war on Palestinians. Rather than working to secure a ceasefire, it continues to arm Israel and joined the US' coalition with absurd name "Operation Prosperity Guardian." to attack the Houthi's blockade of the red sea – a blockade that was initiated to try to and secure a ceasefire. Who else joined? Key NATO allies, UK, Denmark, Netherlands and Greece

In Britain support for a ceasefire is increasing – at 69% in February up from 59% in November. And 66% believe Israel should enter into peace negotiations with Hamas.

The Conservative government is desperate to demonise peace protestors and is redefining the definition of extremism to isolate the Muslim community.

Facing a defeat in the general election later this year, the government is desperate to remain the US' number one ally. It is pushing a fear-mongering agenda of a 'pre-war situation' in which Britain must prepare to wage war against Russia, Iran, China, and the Yemen.

So, US plans to site B61-12s at Lakenheath are now being framed in the media as part of this huge push for increased military spending and talks around conscription. To defend a militarily 'weak' Britain.

Of course, we know this is rubbish.

UK Has 4th biggest military spending in World.

It has aggressive foreign policy – Afghanistan & Iraq. Sending billions to Ukraine.

Increasing its nuclear arsenal by 40%.

And the expansion of Lakenheath has been accelerating.

In August last year Federation of American Scientists uncovered the US Air Force document referring to a contract for a 144-bed dormitory

for additional US personnel to participate in a potential 'surety mission' which we know is jargon used to refer to nuclear weapons.

In response CND launched a legal challenge, to in order to put the media spotlight on Lakenheath and pressure the MoD to provide transparent information about what the purpose of the development is." – ie., come clean its about nuclear weapons.

So we've argued that there needs to be an environmental assessment made. MoD say development won't lead to any significant environmental damage. But we're arguing that nukes are not environmentally friendly, nor are nuclear accidents!

There have also been new contracts to install ballistic protection sites at the base, designed to protect troops from strikes on "high value assets" [i.e., nuclear weapons] have been awarded.

And – to really make clear how significant the British base is to NATO's plans, a high-level visit of the US Deputy Defence Secretary, Kathleen Hicks took place late last year.

In terms of timescale, we know the US has already deployed B61-12s to bases in States, and plans to have them deployed around Europe by end of 2025. So could be coming this year or next. Peter feed in on this?

Opposition to the developments is growing as is public awareness.

As well as holding national protests at the base calling on the government to refuse delivery of the bombs, CND organised a citizens weapons inspection stunt in September, which secured really great regional news coverage.

CND also organised an action at the base which was filmed for the state television's prestigious (though often quite reactionary!)

Panorama documentary series called 'Nuclear Armageddon: How close are we?' which aired on in advance of the Doomsday Clock announcement in January.

The documentary makes an assessment of the latest nuclear threats and spotlights US plans to cite B61-12 nuclear bombs at Lakenheath. It is still available on the BBC's IPlayer website here – put it in the chat!:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001vgq5/nuclear-armageddon-how-close-are-we>

Because of the higher profile the campaign is receiving, this means that we're getting more activity focused on the base from a whole breadth of the peace and anti-nuclear movement – this is brilliant!

So, we have regional action at the base in May. We're planning to make it an issue in the local elections in May and national elections in Autumn – Securing commitments from candidates to oppose US nuclear weapons coming to Britain again.

And we've got a women's peace camp planned for June – including women who were centrally involved in the women's peace camp at Greenham Common. People like Angie Zelta are calling for women all over the world to come over and join it.

I think Ann Wright is planning to come - which would be amazing!

We'll also be focusing actions around the NATO Summit and the 75th anniversary in July. Something in Britain and maybe a small delegate to the States.