The Development of Missile Defence in Europe

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Each year since 2000 the UN has designated 4 to 10 October as World Space Week to “celebrate the contributions of space science and technology to the betterment of the human condition”. At these times the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space calls for global actions, protests and educational events to oppose the militarization of space. We call it: “Keep Space for Peace Week” and we focus on a different topic of the militarization and weaponisation of space.

This year from 1-8 October our theme was the “Chokehold on Russia and China – Why is the US provoking global war?” and it included a number of European events in Britain, Germany, Italy and Norway.

In England, Oxfordshire Peace Group organised a march and rally at Croughton, a major US space warfare base due to be expanded at the cost of £200m and responsible for space communications and intelligence operations alongside drone, bomber guidance and missile defence functions. In North Yorkshire, two actions were held – one organised by the Campaign for Accountability for American Bases (CAAB) at Menwith Hill and the other by Yorkshire CND at Fylingdales. Menwith Hill is a huge US National Security Agency and National Reconnaissance Office base with surveillance, drone operation, missile defence and military intelligence functions. Fylingdales is a US/UK Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) and US Space Surveillance and Missile Defence radar facility. As a BMEWS station, Fylingdales could be the trigger that initiates the firing of UK and US nuclear weapons in response to a real missile attack or a mistaken false alarm. However, as part of the US missile defence system, it is also a component of the US nuclear strike force.
A Brief History

In 2002 (shortly after the US President George W Bush unilaterally withdrew from the ABM Treaty with Russia) the US Nuclear Posture Review defined a new strategy for US nuclear forces, consisting of the three nuclear delivery platforms of the Cold War - bombers, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) plus Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), space and cyber capabilities - all linked through satellite communication, command and control systems. The new BMD addition allows the US to be more readily offensive - providing the capability of making first strike attacks without fear of retaliation – i.e. undermining everyone else’s deterrence strategies and becoming ‘missile offence’, not ‘defence’.

In 2003, after receiving a formal request from the US, the British Government quickly agreed to take part in US missile defence and authorised an upgrade of the radar at Fylingdales, for
accurate detection missile tracking, and a satellite downlink facility at the Menwith Hill US spy base to support space based missile defence components.

There were additional reports that Britain had secretly agreed to a US request to station missile interceptors at Fylingdales in late 2004 but this was denied by the Ministry of Defence. The US also planned for controversial radar and missile sites in the Czech Republic and Poland, close to the Russian border, and the US Navy developed a sea-based Aegis BMD system to be deployed on warships.

In response, Vladimir Putin declared that such a deployment would lead to a new arms race and warned that Russia would freeze its compliance with the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) - which limits military deployments across the continent - until all NATO countries had ratified the adapted CFE treaty. There was also large-scale public protest in Europe, particularly in the Czech Republic, and before being elected in 2008, Barak Obama stated that he would re-evaluate missile defence systems.
Protest in Poland and the Czech Republic against George W. Bush’s proposed installation of missiles and a high powered radar respectively, in their countries for U.S. missile defence.

After being elected in 2008, Obama did cancel the components proposed for Poland and the Czech Republic but merely shifted the emphasis of US missile defense from defending the homeland against ICBMs to defending military operations against regional battleground threats. This transition was to be carried out through his so-called ‘European Phased Adaptive Approach’ (EPAA) involving the expansion of the ship-based Aegis systems and developing a land-based missile launcher (Aegis Ashore).

The Obama Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA) – 2009

- Phase 1 - 2011: Aegis BMD-capable multi-role ship deployed to the Mediterranean, Spain will host four US Aegis-capable ships at Rota; AN/TPY-2 radar in Turkey; Patriot missiles in Poland;
- Phase 2 – 2015: Aegis Ashore interceptor (the SM-3 IB) battery to be hosted by Romania;
- Phase 3 – 2018: SM-3 IIA (under development with Japan) to be deployed in Poland and at sea. Additional sensors and tracking capabilities to be on-line by 2018.
- GMD radars and target discrimination capabilities are expected to support the PAA.
- Adopted by NATO at November 2010 Summit in Lisbon.

It is worth noting perhaps, that the former chair of General Dynamics (the builders of Aegis destroyers), Lester Crown, helped raise millions of dollars for Obama’s presidential campaign.
Just months before Obama was elected President in 2008, the Aegis system demonstrated its use as an anti-satellite weapon when it destroyed a US satellite said to have gone out of control in an operation called ‘Burnt Frost’.

As a mobile system it can be readily positioned around the globe and, as of March 2016, there are 33 Aegis BMD capable ships in the US Navy (5 cruisers and 28 destroyers). Of these, 17 are assigned to the Pacific Fleet and 16 to the Atlantic Fleet with 4 deployed in the Mediterranean. The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) and US Navy are working together to increase this to 43 by 2019 and the US Navy’s shipbuilding plan projects a total of between 80 and 97 by the end of 2043. The Aegis ships are built at Bath Iron Works in Maine, also the home of our co-ordinator Bruce Gagnon.
The ‘Aegis Ashore’ system is composed of a vertical launcher and support facility, similar to that being used on ships and, in addition to the Aegis systems, the US army has developed its own land-based mobile Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to be deployed against short and intermediate range missiles.

Enter NATO

NATO took a keen interest and its 2008 Summit in Bucharest agreed to integrate components of the EPAA into systems that it was developing for theatre missile defence. This soon developed further and in Lisbon in 2010 NATO decided to expand the combined programme to cover European populations and territory with a command centre at Ramstein Air Base in Germany.
In 2011 an agreement was made with Turkey to host a forward based X-band radar system at Kürecik which was then established the following year.

The US also confirmed agreements to base 24 Aegis Ashore interceptors at the Redzikowo military base in Poland by 2018 and the hosting of US Aegis missile defense ships in Rota, southern Spain. In addition, the Netherlands decided to adapt 4 air-defence frigates for NATO’s BMD capability. From 2018 all four Royal Netherlands Navy Air Defense and Command Frigates (ADCF) will be fitted with SMART-L radars to enable them to detect and track ballistic targets outside the earth's atmosphere for other NATO missile defense components.
In 2012 NATO announced that a BMD command and control centre had been set up at Ramstein and the US established the Aegis Ashore Naval Support Facility in Deveselu, Romania in 2014 which was activated in 2016 and the NATO BMD system was declared operational.

Russia has always been particularly concerned about these activities and claims that the activation violates the 1987 INF treaty – a claim that has been dismissed by the US. There has also been heavy criticism about the viability of the system in reports by the US Defense Advisory Board in 2011 and the Government Accountability Office and the US National Academy of Sciences in 2012. The US has ignored all criticism and a 1990 agreement with Russia not to push NATO further east after the reunification of Germany, and placed missiles in former Warsaw Pact countries.

Russia is uneasy about the destabilising nature of these moves and the build up of NATO troops on its doorstep. President Putin believes that the purpose of US missile defence is to downgrade the Russian nuclear deterrent by disabling its ability to retaliate to a nuclear first strike on Russian missile silos. A response from the few remaining missiles not destroyed in a first strike could be readily ‘mopped up’ even by a limited missile defence system. In particular, Russia does not like the stationing of missile defence systems along its borders and has repeatedly asked for legally binding assurances that NATO missile interceptors would not be used against Moscow’s strategic missiles. However, Washington is unwilling to do this and repeats claims that the system is needed to counter threats to Europe by Iran and North Korea – even though neither country has ever actually threatened Europe and there have been successful talks with Iran on limiting its nuclear program.
Russia has reacted by threatening to deploy short range Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad, close to the Polish border, as a counter measure. Tensions between east and west are very high and have resulted in increased military exercises by both sides and a serious escalation around the conflict in Ukraine.

Similarly, China sees the positioning of THAAD radars and missile systems in Japan and South Korea are also a threat to them. Consequently Russia and China are no longer likely to talk about nuclear disarmament and are building up their own arsenals instead.
Recently in NATO

The NATO Summit was held in Warsaw in July this year. It was not expected to be positive – NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had already declared that it would be NATO’s biggest reinforcement since the Cold War and huge NATO exercises had been held in Poland a few weeks before. The military base near Wedrzyn in western Poland had been part of one of the largest NATO exercises since the end of the Cold War.

Around 30,000 troops, and numerous vehicles, aircraft and ships from more than 20 countries were involved in a show of force against Russia. The ten-day Anakonda 2016 exercise came at the same time as a sharp deterioration in relations between Russia and NATO and Moscow criticized the exercises and commented that “the war games … do not contribute to the atmosphere of trust and safety on the continent.”

Earlier in February and March, NATO held its annual 2 weeks of high intensity operations in central Norway, entitled “Exercise Cold Response 2016”. It included land, sea and air mobilisations, with military contributions from 12 NATO members and 2 partner nations. 15,000 troops took part from (among others) Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Latvia, Poland, Germany, France, Britain, Canada, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands. The increasing frequency of exercises such as this has led to the US establishing storage depots for tanks and amphibious assault vehicles in Norway. These threatening exercises in the Far North are undoubtedly to show Russia what NATO and the US are prepared to do to ensure access to new sea routes and new resources that become available in the Arctic as the ice cap recedes due to climate change.
Operation Cold Response 2016

The possibility of NATO taking collective military action was greatly increased at the Warsaw Summit through its recognition of cyberspace as ‘an operational domain, alongside air, land and sea’. Thus, cyber attacks can potentially trigger an Article 5 military response (an attack on one country is an attack on all). This is particularly worrying because of the difficulty in determining the source of cyber attacks and technical evidence of them is rarely shared or clarified.

To resource all these actions and more, NATO expects its members to increase their spending on defence by 3% - totalling an additional $8 billion. According to SIPRI, US military spending is already 34% of the world’s total and all NATO countries together add up to more than half - whereas Russia spends 4% of the world’s total. Who then is the most dangerous? However, it shows that the demonisation of Putin and Russia is good business for the western military industrial complex.

In another development, NATO is to continue to help further militarise the EU – which has been developing its own military since the Lisbon Treaty of 2009. The Secretary General signed a Joint Declaration with the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission to take the partnership between NATO and the European Union ‘to a higher level’.
NATO is therefore set to continue to promote military intervention and posturing as the way to resolve problems. This can only provoke military responses from others and worsen the situations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine. We have learned from the Chilcot Enquiry that the reasons given for war must always be challenged – and it is up to us to continually make that challenge and refute the necessity of going to war.

Recent Developments in the UK

Menwith Hill

Just a few weeks ago in September, the online investigative journal The Intercept revealed that NSA documents provided by Edward Snowden showed that intelligence gathered through satellite technology at the Menwith Hill NSA spy base help the US with targeted killings. Advanced surveillance programmes at Menwith Hill have located 'suspected terrorists accessing the internet in remote parts of the world' and 'provided support for conventional British and American military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.'

There is also clear evidence that the UK and US governments work together to aid Saudi Arabia’s serious breaches of international law by targeting civilians in Yemen. Britain’s new Foreign
Minister, Boris Johnson, is sweeping aside the evidence and silencing the media in a cynical move to maintain lucrative UK arms sales. The UK government has misled parliament by denying its role in these illegal operations. In his book, *Web of Deceit*, historian Mark Curtis lays out “Britain's real role in the world” and concludes that, for several centuries, the primary function of the British state is to aid British companies in getting their hands on other countries' resources. This means initiating war, military interventions, threats, bullying, and other aggressive actions, usually in support of the US and/or Nato.

This global imperialism is dressed up in propaganda garb as *countering terrorism*, *improving world security*, *working with our allies* and similar pieties propagated by the 'mainstream' media. In this way, Britain is partly responsible for appalling acts of violence, while proclaiming its supposed desire for ‘peace’ and ‘security’.

Opposition to US BMD is therefore increasingly important, as the US moves to install missile defence systems in Europe and Asia are ratcheting up confrontation with Russia and China, blocking moves towards nuclear disarmament and generating a new arms race.

**Croughton**

![Image of Croughton]

USAF Croughton is the headquarters for the US 422nd Air Base Group and co-ordinates communications support operations for the US Department of Defence and “civilian agencies”. Molesworth and Alconbury are to close and their functions transferred to a newly created NATO 'Joint Intelligence Analysis Centre', at Croughton.

The US facility at RAF Croughton has a direct cable link to GCHQ (the Government Communications Head Quarters, the UK equivalent to the NSA) and has been identified as a relay centre for CIA agent and clandestine communications. It was named in leaked documents as playing a key support role in embassy-based spying. Data from the global network of US embassy
spy posts (such as those implicated in the eavesdropping on Angela Merkel’s mobile phone) are funnelled back to Washington through this facility.

Croughton is home to the 422nd Air Base Group, whose role includes processing at least a quarter of all US military communications in Europe. The base was originally used in the 1950s by the US to relay nuclear bomber communications. In 2013 British Telecom won a £14 million contract to supply a secure fibre-optic link between the base and the US air base at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti which is used to co-ordinate drone strikes over Yemen, indicating its use to relay instructions for these attacks.

This high speed link has good public relations possibilities for the US base and local residents are happy to get faster broadband for their internet use. The base is keen on community links and many of the base personnel live off base locally. A community relations adviser is also employed “to promote friendship and understanding between local British people and the base personnel” and events such as ‘British-American quiz nights’ are held regularly to ensure good relations with the locals.

In 2014 the US announced it would spend $317m (£189m) on a project to expand the base, including an installation for the Defense Intelligence Agency (the Pentagon’s main military espionage service). The upgrade is due for completion in 2017 and will involve the “consolidation” of six existing US intelligence groups, currently based at Molesworth in Cambridgeshire, into a single facility at Croughton and will lead to the closure of Molesworth and its neighbour Alconbury. It will also further concentrate US intelligence activity at Croughton, whose stated purpose is to
provide "world-class combat support" for activities including "global strike operations" and has recently had its security arrangements tightened. It will also become the principle intelligence centre for the US Africom – or Africa command.

The siting of these critical installations on British soil underlines the close integration of British and American intelligence activities and is an example of how the 800 or so foreign military bases spread around the world are utilised to further the empirical reach of the US.

Conclusion

The protests at Fylingdales, Menwith Hill, Croughton and all others during ‘Keep Space for Peace Week’ are both urgent and timely. US missile ‘defence’ is offensive, expensive, destabilising and extremely dangerous and it must continue to be strongly opposed.

The world is facing huge and growing problems of climate change and global poverty. We will need to cooperate on an unprecedented scale in order to meet these challenges. Instead, the US and NATO continue to pursue aggressive policies focusing only on military solutions to conflicts. Their agreement to develop a Missile Defence system for Europe will burden European allies with some of the costs and enable more military bases to be constructed. Attempts to placate Russia by suggesting limited involvement have failed and the US refusal to share technology and information has led to suspicions that the real aim of the system is to threaten Russia. The US has denied this but analysis of the geographic locations and missile trajectories has shown that the radar and interceptors could be deployed against Russian missiles from some of its western launch sites.
Russia has reacted by: threatening to withdraw from current arms treaties; working with their allies to develop new countermeasures and their own defensive shield system; and deploying more missiles on their borders. Meanwhile, the construction and deployment of ship-based Aegis systems enables the US to be more flexible in positioning its interceptor missiles elsewhere; in particular, as part of the so-called ‘Pacific Pivot’, ship-based missiles mean that China can be surrounded, contained and intimidated by the system. In response, China is also increasing and modifying its nuclear arsenal. Thus missile defence is a key reason why the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is being contravened through the planned upgrades of the nuclear arsenals of all the nuclear weapon states.

Missile defence has nothing to do with global security but everything to do with US global dominance. It is the ‘shield’ that complements a US-led nuclear sword and is generating a new nuclear arms race. Involving European NATO allies in US missile defence plans may seem to enable closer European collaboration but it also means that once again diplomacy and multilateral arms control have been sacrificed to the unilateral use of force. The developing US agenda of missile defence does not fit with a cooperative security model for Europe.

The twin challenges of war and climate change threaten our very existence and to ensure our survival we must adopt ways of working globally which involve developing mutual trust and cooperative work. To address these challenges and the rapidly changing security context will require a significant international dialogue which is absent at this time. An extremely important first step is to reverse the current dependence on military aggression and intervention to address international problems - including the demonisation and scapegoating of others. All foreign military bases should be closed and states should stop threatening to use weapons of mass destruction and cancel their nuclear weapons programmes.

In the long term we must change our society and culture in fundamental ways – to recognise that violent conflict solves nothing. Education has a major role to play and should be provided free for all and focus on free thinking, understanding and learning rather than training and indoctrination. The widespread participation in society of a well informed population is vital if we want to achieve a peaceful future.

We must focus on the security and well being of people not the survival of the state. The vast majority of people do not want war – they do not want to fight one or be a victim of one. Demilitarisation has to be one of the fundamental first steps – why are we spending so much on weapons and the military when so little is being done to help the poor, the hungry, the sick and
homeless? We have already constructed the mechanisms and processes. On a local scale state governments have departments to deal with these issues (but they are starved of money). On a regional scale organisations based on co-operation exist in Europe (the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe- OSCE) and Asia (the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation - SAARC) but they must be used and taken much more seriously. On a global scale we have International Law and the United Nations – but we need to pay more attention to them and the UN needs restructuring to be more democratic and representative, so that it is not dominated by just a few countries. We must make use of all these instruments and stop looking for ways to avoid them.

At the moment things do not look good – generally politics in the west seems to be moving to the right, the European Union is becoming more militarised and Britain has opted out but not for the right reasons. We won’t mention the US Presidential election! However, there are signs that change is possible. In the US Bernie Sanders made the term ‘socialism’ almost acceptable and collected a large following. Throughout Europe people are starting to look for alternatives. In the UK we now have a leader of the Labour Party who actively campaigned against war and nuclear weapons. Jeremy Corbyn was elected to that position by hundreds of thousands of party voters, but he does not have the backing of his party’s own MPs who are stuck in old ways of thinking and working hard to undermine his position.

On issues of human rights, security, the use of outer space and the environment, NGOs and activists continue to act as the conscience of the world but it will require much more international co-operation and some courageous and inspirational world leaders to ensure that we survive the next 50 years or so.