



# LANCASTER DISTRICT CND NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2012

SECRETARIES: J & D ALLWRIGHT 01524 33991

## Public Meeting and AGM

Let's talk about drone warfare:  
*Drones, robots and the "Playstation" mentality*

Discussion led by **Andrew Gibson** of East Midlands CND

Come and join our discussion and help set our campaigning priorities for 2012 - 2013

Friends' Meeting House  
Meeting House Lane  
Lancaster

Thursday 27th September 7.30-8.30pm  
Refreshments available

## Lancaster and District CND AGM

Our AGM will follow the discussion on drone warfare

- Annual report
- Election of officers and committee
- Setting campaigning priorities for 2012-2013

Vacancies exist for a press officer and a committee member.

### Dates for your diary:

**Tue 9th October:** CAAB demonstration at gates of Menwith Hill

**Sat 13th October:** Building towards a nuclear weapons-free Middle East. CND International Conference, 10am - 5.30pm, London. Free entry, open to the public.

**Sunday 14th October:** CND AGM and Conference, register at [www.cnduk.org](http://www.cnduk.org).

**Saturday 20th October:** Anti-austerity march in London. Join the CND bloc.

**Saturday 10th November:** Peace History Conference, 9.30am - 5.30pm, People's History Museum, Manchester. Visit [www.gmdcnd.org.uk](http://www.gmdcnd.org.uk).

# CND TO CAMPAIGN AGAINST DRONES

CND's voice has been added to others around the world expressing serious concern about the increasing use of armed drones in places including Somalia, Yemen and Palestine. An RAF base at Waddington is now involved in controlling drones used in Afghanistan. A protest will be held there on September 23rd, the UN's International Day of Peace. Yorkshire CND web site has details. LD CND has obtained some anti-drone materials and will be distributing them from stalls and other events during the rest of the year.

## What are drones ?

Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles, either controlled by 'pilots' on the ground or, increasingly, pre-programmed to arrive at a particular destination. They may carry bombs or missiles.

First used by the CIA in the Balkans war, drones have been used in a range of places, including Somalia, Yemen, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and, perhaps most controversially, by the US in Pakistan. Navi Pillay, UN Commissioner for Human Rights, said during her recent fact finding tour of Pakistan that the strikes were "legally problematic".

The UK began using armed drones in Afghanistan in Oct 2007 after purchasing three Reapers from General Atomics in 2007 at a cost of £6m each.

From a military perspective, drones have several advantages over traditional aircraft: they can stay aloft for many hours (Zephyr, a British drone under development, has just broken the world record by flying for over 82 hours non-stop); they are much cheaper than military aircraft and they are flown remotely so there is no danger to the flight crew.

## What are the problems?

**Inaccuracy** is a serious problem. While supposedly carefully and accurately controlled to hit particular human targets, drone attacks have been responsible for the deaths of many innocent civilians and children, including families attending weddings and funerals and groups of people emerging from hospitals and religious assemblies.

Civilian deaths in Pakistan have caused such outrage that the Pakistani Government, an ally of the US, which originally tacitly approved most US drone strikes on its soil, is now vociferously complaining that such attacks violate international law.

**The legality** of drone attacks is a complex and vexed question. The deaths are often describes as 'extra judicial kill-



A Predator Drone Fires a Missile

ings' and it is accepted that the US maintains a list of people it wishes to kill, usually those believed to be terrorists, though since the whole affair is surrounded by secrecy there is little sure knowledge and no due process. A person on a list of targets has no way to appeal against the death sentence passed upon him. A recent *New Statesman* article by Geoffrey Robertson QC advances the argument that the use of drones violates every 'human rights principle in the book'. There is, Robertson suggests, an inherent contradiction in the US position that the use of drones is legal to kill people when fighting a war when the targets are defined as 'terrorists' i.e. as people who by definition are not fighting a war. 'War law' applies to wars, defined as armed conflicts between states. Robertson argues that if, under 'war law' it is thought lawful to kill Bin Laden and Hamas commanders, then on the very same argument it would have to be lawful for these targets to kill their opposite numbers: Obama and Netanyahu.

## Technology has outrun morality and the law

As Robertson puts it: there is a sense that international law has failed: the UN Charter, the conventions and the norms of the courts have not provided satisfactory guidance for waging asymmetric warfare. Hence the silence of states and the recent earnest request, by the UN's human rights commissioner, for urgent clarification of the law. The way forward may be to find a way back, to reasonable force and proportionality. At present, many drone killings can only be described as summary executions – the punishment of the Red Queen ("sentence first, trial later"), which denies the right to life, the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial.

## For More Information:

Download the latest report from

<http://dronewarsuk.wordpress.com/aboutdrone/>

# A Letter From Alistair Burt

We thought we should share this ironical response to a letter asking about the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

With many thanks to member Barbara Fairbairn, a staunch letter writer on CND issues



Dear Eric

Thank you for your letter of 6 June to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of your constituent, Mrs Barbara Fairbairn ... . I am replying as Minister responsible for this area of policy.

The Government is committed to the long term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. The UK has a particularly strong record in fulfilling disarmament commitments and meeting our international and legal obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We have taken a number of additional important disarmament steps, announcing in the Strategic Defence and Security Review in October 2010 that we would:

- reduce the number of warheads on board each submarine from a maximum of 48 to a maximum of 40;
- reduce our requirement for operationally available warheads from fewer than 160 to no more than 120; and
- reduce our overall nuclear weapon stockpile to no more than 189 by the mid 2020s.

The Defence Secretary announced on 29 June 2011 that this process is now underway, and that one of our submarines now carries no more than 40 warheads. As well as reducing the size and scale of our nuclear deterrent, we have given a stronger assurance to non-nuclear weapon states that we would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against states parties to the NPT in compliance with their non-proliferation obligations.

We firmly believe that sustainable global nuclear disarmament can only be achieved through a multilateral process, and that the Nuclear NP Treaty is the best vehicle to make progress towards our long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We worked hard to ensure that the NPT Review Conference in May 2010 successfully reached agreement on an Action Plan to revitalise the Treaty across all three of the Treaty's pillars, including measures which will strengthen non-proliferation and compliance, increase cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and nuclear security, as well as make progress on nuclear disarmament.

The Government has been working hard with a wide range of NPT States Parties, including the five NPT nuclear weapons states (P5) to make concrete progress towards fulfilling the agreed action plan. The P5 will meet for their third conference to discuss their disarmament obligations under the NPT in Washington this week. The UK has been working to expand our ground breaking research with Norway on the verification of nuclear warhead dismantlement. The UK and Norway co-hosted an international workshop in December 2011 for 12 non-nuclear weapon states to share information from the research conducted so far. The UK also hosted on 4 April 2012 the first ever meeting of the P5 to discuss the UK Norway initiative and nuclear disarmament verification and held a side event at the Preparatory Committee to update the NPT community on progress and next steps for the initiative. These are practical examples of how the UK is looking for new opportunities to move the nuclear disarmament agenda forward.

Alistair Burt.

## Are We?

A little girl whilst holding her mother's hand  
asked of her mother

'Mummy, why do we have bombs?'

'To keep safe'

Replied her mother.

'Safe from what?'

Asked her daughter.

'Other bombs'

Replied the little girl's mother.

Knowing that her questions

were not really being answered,

with great disappointment,

the little girl gave up asking questions,

and simply said,

'But bombs make me scared Mummy.'

The little girl's mother triumphantly declared,

'That's what makes us safe.'

After a very long time,

with huge tears in her eyes,

the little girl reluctantly let go of her

mother's hand,

and said,

'I

don't

want

to

be

safe.'

With thanks to A. Tinsley for permission to reproduce his poem  
from Heddwach (the CND Wales Newsletter, summer 2011).