

Scotland & England, an Anti-Nuclear “Jolly”

By John LaForge

In December, I was invited to be part of a panel discussion on uranium weapons in the British House of Commons, and in February I put on my best second-hand coat and tie to speak in Committee Room 12 of the “Mother of Parliaments.” It was a heady experience, even if the turnout was light and I didn’t get to harrumph and jeer with the Members of Parliament (MP) in their famously contentious surroundings.

Rae Street of the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium (CADU) sent the invitation and saw to it that I had plane fare and a busy tour of anti-war England and Scotland. Rae is a Vice Chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, UK and a friend who’s been Nukewatch’s guest at anti-Trident/ELF events in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The occasion was CADU’s Parliament Lobby Day Feb. 7, focused on informing MPs about uranium weapons and their environmental, medical, ethical and legal consequences — all in pursuit of an international ban.

Before the London meetings, I took the opportunity to meet activists at Britain’s giant Trident submarine base in Scotland, the U.S. spy base at Menwith Hill, and speak in a pair of college classes in Leeds. Friends there called my trip a “jolly.”

After a scenic day-long train trip to Scotland, I met “Faslane-365” organizers Anna-Linnéa Lundberg and Adam Conway. They are coordinating dozens of affinity groups — from London-based clergy, to Finnish students, to the

Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army — in a 365-day-long series of rolling nonviolent blockades demanding, “No Trident Replacement.”

(The UK government is expected to approve on March 14 a proposal to spend up to \$76 billion on a new ballistic missile submarine system.)

On Feb. 2, Anna, Jane Tallents, a founder of the British anti-Trident campaign and Angie Zelter, a Right Livelihood Award winner, led me on a sunny walking tour of the base’s perimeter. Talking the whole while, they explained how nuclear warheads produced in England are placed atop Trident missiles that are *produced in the U.S.* Indeed, the British Tridents must sail to “the States” to pick up their treaty-busting missiles and have their crews trained at Kings Bay, Georgia.

The police later ordered us to stop walking. We continued and they politely frisked, arrested and detained the women but let me out at the main gate. I was left free to stroll to the nearby Faslane Peace Camp, split some stove wood (as if I were back home), and enjoy a spot of tea with a few long-term peacecampers. The women were released after a few hours with charges pending as usual.

After another day-long ride back south that included seven train changes, I met Rae Street for a Chernobyl Children’s Project fund-raiser.

Rae and peace activist Pat Sanchez showed me the U.S. spy base at Menwith Hill, the world’s largest electronic

surveillance operation, a few hours north of London. Along with the stalwart anti-war agitators Helen John and Sylvia Boyes, we got a good look at the base strewn as it is with 30 huge geodesic globes that cover as many satellite dishes.

Menwith Hill’s 4,000 U.S. military personnel were awarded wartime service medals for their part in the 1991 and the 2003 U.S. bombardments of Iraq, even though the base is 2,100 miles from Baghdad. Both attacks were partially, if inaccurately, directed by satellites.

(The spy base is run by the unregulated National Security Agency or NSA, and it snoops on communications worldwide, relaying information to NSA headquarters in Ft. Meade, Maryland. The agency was set up by presidential decree without any debate in the U.S. Congress, and until a few years ago even its existence was a secret. NSA’s charter, budget and any mention of its duties are still classified.) Helen John delivered me to Leeds, where Metropolitan University lecturers Dave Webb and Steve Wright introduced me to students from their Global Ethics course. I spoke about the “not guilty” verdicts we won in DU trespass cases in Minnesota, and about how we have to risk jail in order to put the weapons makers on trial.

Back in London for the lobbying effort, I was hosted by Janet Shapiro, an activist with Radical Statistics (radstats.org.uk). Over morning tea, the kitchen radio reported that in Malaysia, an International Tribunal had put Bush and Blair on trial in absentia for waging indiscriminate military aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq.

Using the Underground trains to get to city center and Parliament, especially for someone who’s lived in the country for 28 years, seemed like a carnival ride.

Standing before Big Ben and the spectacular Westminster Palace — parts of which were built in 1097 — it struck me how the weapons we struggle to abolish have developed at a speed far beyond our evolving means of political redress. A new batch of war crimes are already alleged before society has tracked down the last perpetrators of unprovoked military aggression.

With today’s uranium weapons and bunker busters, white phosphorus and fuel-air explosives; with our thermobaric, napalm, cluster and hydrogen bombs, the prospect is that the environmental and medical consequences of modern war will be killing friend and enemy alike even after the House of Commons is another 1010 years old.



Greenpeace Ship Seized at “No Trident Replacement!” Action

FASLANE, Scotland — The Greenpeace ship *Arctic Sunrise* and its crew were seized Feb. 23 by British military police and detained at the Faslane naval base near Helensburgh, Scotland where the UK’s nuclear submarines are berthed. The 162-foot, 949-ton *Arctic Sunrise* sailed to the submarine base along with a flotilla of small craft intent on raising awareness of Britain’s plans to replace the decrepit, retiring Trident fleet. Britain has four Trident subs: HMS *Vanguard*, HMS *Vengeance*, and, uh, *Vainglorious*, *Venerable* or *Vicious* or something. Anyway they all start with V (*for verboten*).

Activists using Greenpeace motorized inflatables from the ship were arrested after they crossed into the security zone and hung banners on the floating fence that surrounds the submarine pier area.

Greenpeace reports that 20 MPs stormed the ship and smashed their way onto the bridge shortly after 5 p.m., following a day-long stand-off. The police cut the anchor

chain and towed the ship into the submarine base. All onboard were arrested and held in custody until the 26th when they were expected to appear at court in Dumfries. A motion congratulating the Greenpeace action was lodged in the Scottish Parliament.

Greenpeace campaigner Louise Edge, onboard *Arctic Sunrise*, said: “We’re blockading the base because these nuclear armed submarines pose a threat to the security of the world, not least by encouraging other countries to go nuclear in the future. Tony Blair is playing a dangerous game by saying to countries like North Korea that nuclear weapons are necessary for national defence, that the UK doesn’t care about its international legal obligations, and that nuclear proliferation is the way forward. He is sending a message to the world that might be welcomed in the capital of North Korea but will be widely condemned by people who want to end nuclear proliferation.” (See Faslane365.org for update)

Uranium Weapons Updates

By John LaForge

European Parliament Passes Fourth Resolution Calling for DU Ban

The European Parliament (EP) has again adopted a resolution calling upon the European Union to “work hard to ... stop the use of (depleted) uranium warheads ...” [used by U.S. forces in Iraq].

On the anniversary of last year’s historic European Parliament vote for a moratorium leading to a ban on uranium weapons, the EP adopted its fourth such measure, which asks European Union member states “to ensure that the scope of Protocol III to the CCW [Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons] on incendiary weapons is expanded in order to ... stop the use of (depleted) uranium warheads.”

Last year’s vote for a ban came after two other resolutions calling for a moratorium.

The November resolution calls for Protocol III of the 1980 CCW to be expanded to include depleted uranium. Protocol III places limits on the use of incendiary weapons — currently defined as any weapon which is primarily designed to set fire to objects or to cause burn injuries to persons through the action of flame, heat, or combination thereof, produced by a chemical reaction of a substance delivered on the target. Incendiary weapons can take the form of flame throwers, improvised mines, shells, rockets, grenades, mines, bombs and other containers of flammable substances.

Aerojet’s DU Weapons Production Targeted by CPT

By Bob Nichols

In Jonesborough, Tennessee, the Chicago-based Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) conducted a 10-day prayer vigil at the Aerojet Ordnance mill, producers of weaponized uranium penetrators for use by the U.S. Military worldwide.

CPT members also organized a vigil at Alliant Techsystems in Rocket Center, West Virginia. CPT members interspersed the vigil with local meetings to provide information on the production and use of radiological weapons.

A CPT representative stated, “Alliant Techsystems’ annual corporate statement on expenses and profits proclaims proudly the weapons factory had manufactured 18 million uranium tank penetrator rods for the U.S. military. At slightly more than 10 pounds of radioactive uranium apiece, that is more than 190 million pounds of weaponized uranium, a genocidal weapon.”

International humanitarian law specialists were surprised by the vote, because kinetic energy penetrators like DU were not included in the original CCW treaty, as it was decided that DU has only a secondary incendiary effect, rather than a primary one.

At press time, observers are awaiting clarification from Members of European Parliament on what real measures the EP intends to take to put teeth into the resolution. Challenging Protocol III to prohibit uranium weapons may prove to be a valuable new legal front in the fight against uranium weapons.

Charges Dismissed Against DU Protesters

On October 2, 2006, Edina, Minnesota police arrested 78 nonviolent activists at the front door of the country’s biggest uranium weapons builder Alliant Techsystems (ATK). The group had attempted to deliver to Dan Murphy, ATK’s CEO, a subpoena requiring his appearance to face allegations of crimes against humanity. On Feb. 1, forty of the 78 appeared in court to stand trial on misdemeanor trespass charges. But the group did not make its case that morning. The charges were dismissed against 76 of the 78 defendants. Two defendants retained their right to appeal and will join an appeal, lodged last year by activist Bob Burns, challenging the legitimacy of the Edina City ordinance. The new rule was hurriedly adopted following four “not guilty” verdicts delivered by juries in identical trespass cases. The new law denies the right to a jury.

The spokesman added, “Using the same calculation method that the British Atomic Energy Authority employed in their 1990 projection of potential DU consequences in Iraq, the estimated 95,400 tons of DU produced by Alliant could result in as many as 954 million cancers within the next 10 years. That is unacceptable.”

CPT has called for: 1) Alliant Tech/ABL, Rocket Center, West Virginia, to stop all DU manufacturing and shipping; 2) All world militaries to stop using DU; 3) All military personnel to refuse to load or use DU ammunition; 4) The U.S. military and all DU producers to join with BAE Systems of Britain and the British military as they have stopped DU weapons production and stopped its use in warfare and training; and 5) The U.S. Army and Air Force to follow the lead of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps which have stopped their use of DU.

— Bob Nichols, a correspondent for the San Francisco Bay View, wrote a longer version of this report for CPT.

World Uranium Summit Promises Resistance

In their “Declaration of the Indigenous World Uranium Summit,” delivered from Window Rock, Navajo Nation Dec. 2, 2006, the people gathered pledged to rid the world of the evils of the nuclear industry. The final communiqué said in part, “We ... will enunciate specific plans of action at the tribal, local, national and international levels to support Native resistance to the nuclear fuel chain. And we will pursue legal and political redress for all past, current and future impacts of the nuclear fuel chain on Indigenous Peoples and their resources.”

DU “Killing Italian Troops”

Italian soldiers who served in the peacekeeping corps in Bosnia and Kosovo are still dying following exposure to DU, the BBC has reported.

Troops who served as peacekeepers in the 1990s believe their cancers and other radiation-related illnesses stem from extended exposure to DU.

NATO officials say the United States fired about 11,000 munitions containing DU during the bombardment in Bosnia in 1995 and 30,000 DU munitions during its 1999 shelling of Kosovo. A soldiers’ association says 50 veterans have died and another 200 are seriously ill, primarily with cancer.

The Italians who served in Bosnia and Kosovo were involved in the clean-up of battlefields and came into close contact with exploded and dispersed DU.

The Italian soldiers’ organization ANAVAF (Association National Attending Victims Enlisted in the Armed Forces), says many of those who have died or are ill have contracted cancers and other serious illnesses that they believe developed because they were exposed to DU for a lengthy period of time.

In 2002, the Italian military published a report compiled by independent scientists which found that an excessive number of Italian Balkan peacekeepers were suffering from a cancer called Hodgkin’s disease.

Like in the U.S., a number of children fathered by the soldiers have been born with disabilities. ANAVAF claims that a number of children, offspring of troops who served for lengthy period in the Balkans, were born with birth defects. There are similar reports from soldiers’ associations in Belgium, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands.

Both the U.S. and Britain acknowledge that dust from DU can be dangerous if inhaled but they insist the danger is short-lived and localized.